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JOURNALISM REVIEW

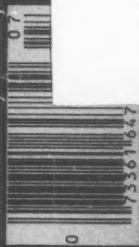
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● To assess the performance of journalism in all its forms, to call attention to its shortcomings and strengths, and to help define — or redefine — standards of honest, responsible service . . . to help stimulate continuing improvement in the profession and to speak out for what is right, fair, and decent ●

Excerpt from the *Review's* founding editorial, Autumn 1961

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CHRONICLE

The Carl Channell story

When *The Miami Herald* reported on Gary Hart's womanizing, the rest of the press gave it enormous play. But when National Public Radio this spring reported on the homosexuality of Carl "Spitz" Channell, a major player in the Iran-contra scandal, the press backed off, either ignoring the story or only hinting at it.

Channell, a former West Virginia motel operator, became a highly successful conservative fundraiser who, by most accounts, raised some \$10 million from wealthy donors to benefit the Nicaraguan contras. He first gained public attention after reports in De-

\$17,000 in unearned consulting fees to Eric Olson, Channell's long-time companion, and \$56,000 to a San Francisco consulting firm headed by Ken Gilman, the companion of NEPL's executive director, Daniel Lynn Conrad.

The NPR report pointed out that it is not unusual for gay men to hold influential positions in Washington. But Browning, who is gay, did find it puzzling that high officials in a conservative administration would not only work with an organization run primarily by gays, but would also share with it "detailed knowledge of one of the Reagan administration's most sensitive and super-secret policy initiatives."

NPR acting news director Neal Conan says that what made the story news was the money connection. "A large part of Frank's story was essentially a nepotism case," he says. The payment of unearned fees by public figures to male companions justified reporting their sexual orientation, Conan adds. Some gay and alternative papers picked up the report. But few mainstream news organizations followed up on it.

Some reporters say the reason they did not cover this story is that they could not confirm Browning's findings. Ted Gup, a reporter for *The Washington Post*, says he conducted a detailed investigation of the questioned transactions, including the alleged use of \$250 in tax-exempt money to buy men's silk underwear. Gup says he couldn't substantiate any significant misuse of funds and dropped the story because the expenditures in question amounted to such a small percentage of the millions of dollars unaccounted for in the Iran-contra investigation.

The *Post* did refer to the NPR report in a Style-section piece on conservative gay men that focused on Terry Dolan, the founder of the National Conservative Political Action Committee, who died last December, reportedly of AIDS. The NPR report was mentioned in one paragraph to illustrate "another example of the ironies of gay conservative life."

Paul Houston, a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*, says it was also difficult to prove that Gilman and Olson did no work for Channell's group. A spokesman for the group told Houston that Olson had been paid to set up

a computer system, Houston says, and that Gilman had provided donor lists.

The handful of major newspapers that summarized or followed up on the NPR report concentrated exclusively on the money connection and sidestepped the sexual aspect by referring to Olson and Gilman as friends, roommates, or business associates of Channell and Conrad.

The Washington Times referred to the story, without crediting NPR, in two short paragraphs near the end of a long piece about Channell's guilty plea. Reporter Michael Hedges says the important element was that the money was going to Gilman and Olson. Reporting Channell's sexual orientation "struck me as an intrusion" into the fundraiser's life, he says. But Hedges adds that the story was written so that a "semi-sophisticated" reader could figure out that Channell and Olson were a couple. The piece referred to Olson as Channell's companion and noted that the two lived together in a condominium.

The New York Times, in a detailed piece that focused on the misuse of funds and confirmed and furthered Browning's reporting (but without crediting NPR), used a similar approach. It mentioned that Conrad "shares a residence in San Francisco" with Ken Gilman. *Times* reporter Richard Berke says he didn't think that Channell's homosexuality, well-known among journalists who covered him, was news. "Most reporters in Washington know that many officials in the White House and Congress are gay," Berke says. "Unless we had evidence that [his sexual orientation] influenced Mr. Channell's group's activities, it had no relevance. The key issue was one of privacy." One instance in which he might report that Channell was gay, Berke says, is if he were being blackmailed.

But some journalists believe the papers avoided reporting the homosexual angle because of fear of being accused of prejudice against gays. Mark Hosenball, Washington correspondent for *The Sunday Times* of London, the only major paper to focus on the fact that Channell's group was run by gays, says the money connection made it a story but the sexual aspects were also interesting: the irony of the pro-family Reagan administration working so closely with a gay-run organization, and of Channell soliciting huge amounts of money from wealthy conservatives who express strong antigay feelings. (Browning had also disclosed that Channell, presumably to please a friend who had contributed money to the contra cause, gave \$1,000 to an antigay organization that the friend had helped to organize.) Hosenball



Wide World

The gay factor: Was Carl Channell's homosexuality a legitimate story?

cember that the principal adviser to Channell's media campaign, which aimed negative television ads at congressmen opposed to Reagan's Nicaraguan policies, was Lieutenant Colonel Oliver North. Channell, the first participant in the Iran-contra affair to admit that he had broken the law, pleaded guilty in late April to charges that he had conspired to defraud the government by soliciting tax-exempt contributions to arm the contras. He fingered North as a co-conspirator.

On April 9, National Public Radio's Frank Browning reported that Channell's fundraising organization, the National Endowment for the Preservation of Liberty (NEPL), was dominated by gay men and had "paid thousands of dollars to benefit male companions of its top executives" for work they didn't do.

According to NPR, Channell's group paid

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thinks other papers sidestepped the gay issue for fear of seeming insensitive. "It seems to me that people are going out of their way not to do gay-bashing," he says.

Randy Shilts, a reporter who is gay and who covers AIDS for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, says that many journalists, in an attempt to appear "all nice and liberal," and not antigay, avoided an important element of a big story. Shilts says that editors and reporters probably did not report on Channell's homosexuality because they considered it "a seamy element of the story. . . . It becomes not reporting on something the editors think is distasteful."

One reporter concedes that "we might

have said 'his girlfriend,' if the money had gone to a female companion." By not reporting that Channell and his associates are gay, he says, "reporters are just trying to show a little sensitivity."

Shilts wonders, however, whether it's sensitivity or something else. Journalists may be avoiding saying someone is gay because they think it's a bad thing to say about someone, he says. "I personally don't think it's a bad thing to say about anybody."

Allan Freedman

Allan Freedman, a former intern at the Review, is a reporter at The Alabama Journal in Montgomery.

The education of Pete Hamill

While he was in Mexico City in the fall of 1985, covering the devastation caused by two major earthquakes, New York writer Pete Hamill was so impressed with the *Mexico City News* that he returned there soon after to do a story on the paper. His article, "Miracle in Mexico," which chronicled the English-language daily's transformation from "a kind of bland joke" to "a local newspaper that had risen to the challenge of a Big One," appeared in *Washington Journalism Review* in October 1986. That same month the *Mexico City News* had an enthusiastic new editor: Pete Hamill.

Hamill hoped to pick up where his predecessor, Roger C. Toll, had left off. He had praised Toll in his article for bringing freshness and professionalism to the paper: careful editing, stylish writing, and solid, original reporting on controversial topics, such as pollution, politics, corruption, and drug smuggling, much of it produced by young American writers in their first jobs. Hamill added more reporters, increased local coverage, and published more in-depth pieces, including features on human rights activists. He also brought in the cartoon "Zippy the Pinhead."

Things seemed to be going well until Hamill got a phone call in early February from the paper's publisher, Romulo O'Farrill, about coverage of a student strike at Mexico's National Autonomous University. The *News* had given extensive coverage to the students' side, reporting on the tensions on campus. That day's headline had been GUNSHOTS RIP STRIKERS' BUS AT UNAM. O'Farrill complained that the paper's reporting was unbalanced and told Hamill that he wanted him to cut coverage of the student side way back. Hamill took the call as an ultimatum and quit. Over the next few days, eighteen

other editors and reporters left, too.

O'Farrill's aides met with staff members, but what they had to say only hastened the exodus, says Patty Reinert, a Kansas State University graduate who had worked at the 20,000-circulation paper about six months. "They told us the policy of the *Mexico City News* is to foster relations between the U.S.A. and Mexico and to show the good news of Mexico," Reinert says. "They said the policy was not to criticize or publish articles that show the bad side of the U.S. or Mexican government."

The publisher's aides were talking about traditional Mexican-style journalism, in which government officials and publishers generally cooperate in playing down controversy and playing up articles favorable to government interests. In retrospect, as Hamill himself concedes, the *News* was not as shining an exception to the general rule as he had taken it for.

His article in *Washington Journalism Re-*

Quitting time: Pete Hamill just after he resigned as editor of the *Mexico City News*



Jacqueline Mosio

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view had mentioned one incident of censorship at the *News*: a rift between the paper and then U.S. Ambassador to Mexico John Gavin over a 1985 editorial criticizing Gavin that resulted in O'Farrill's installation of a "supervisor" — actually a censor — at the paper, resignation threats by editors and reporters, and the end of staff-written editorials. Although Francisco Salinas, O'Farrill's aide, denies that the "supervisor," David Amato, was a censor, Amato was eventually removed, and Hamill quoted Toll as saying, "It was a sad episode, but it's all behind us now."

But there had been other instances of censorship besides the Gavin incident. Earlier that same year, O'Farrill had ended publication of the *News*'s biweekly political supplement when its two editors resigned in protest over censorship, and soon after the Gavin issue, a *News* political columnist resigned because the publisher interfered with her work.

Indeed, censorship was so much a way of life at the paper that it continued even after Hamill took over as editor. Patty Reinert says she wrote a series of articles on Acapulco Bay in mid-October that described its waters

as unfit for swimming because they contained high levels of raw sewage. She claims the articles were softened so that the bay would not be portrayed as a health hazard for tourists. "That was the point — you can get sick," she says. "But the editor told me that [a *News* vice president] had been involved in developing Acapulco as a tourist site."

Hamill says that when he first took over he became aware that there was a lot of self-censorship going on. "It took a couple of weeks to get the others to stop doing that. Obviously, I didn't see all the copy. If it continued, it was unbeknownst to me." He was not "particularly surprised" by O'Farrill's actions regarding the student strike. But, he adds, "I was surprised by the nakedness of it." (Francisco Salinas denies that censorship was involved in Hamill's decision to quit. He confirms that O'Farrill told Hamill that the newspaper had to support the university's side of the strike, but says Hamill's refusal to change the coverage was a simple case of insubordination.)

Now Hamill has second thoughts about the article he wrote for *Washington Journalism Review*. "I think certainly I didn't have a sense of the internal politics of the paper that I would as editor. You are dependent on the people you talk to. In retrospect, I wish I hadn't written it."

The first weeks after Hamill's departure were extremely difficult for the *News*. The mass resignations left the paper without a copy desk, a national news staff, one of its finance reporters, and the editors of its arts, sports, and travel sections. Since then, four "reporter-translators" — all Mexican citizens — have been hired to replace the national news staff. Assistant finance editor Douglas D. Friedman describes them as mainly translators of official press releases and articles from the local press.

The reporter shortage has forced the national news staff to translate more and report less, Friedman says, because translations are quicker to do and fill more space. Local coverage is down, too. No one edits the national section now, Friedman says, because there is no national editor and no one has hired copy editors to replace those who resigned. The publisher has not replaced Hamill either.

"They [the publisher and his aides] are really treating the *News* like a stepchild who has gotten into trouble," says Friedman. "Maybe they'll bail him out of jail, but that's about it."

Karen R. Branch

Karen R. Branch worked at the Mexico City *News* until last summer. She is now a correspondents' assistant in the Mexico City bureau of the Los Angeles Times.

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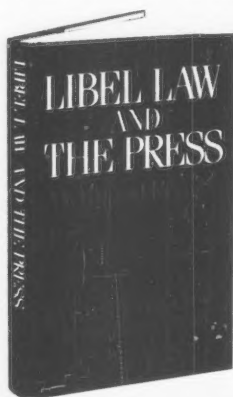
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The deadliest beat

One afternoon last December Guillermo Cano, editor of Colombia's oldest and second-largest daily, *El Espectador*, pulled out of his parking space inside the newspaper's compound in Bogotá. Before he could head for home, a hand poked through the window on the driver's side, holding a gun. The stunned reporters and staffers who gathered seconds later to watch their editor die didn't need to ask who was responsible for the

crime. Like at least eight of the twenty journalists murdered in Colombia in the last ten years, Cano had been an implacable crusader against drugs. Given the content of his editorials, the weekly *Semana* eulogized, "the cause of death was natural."

The day after the murder police surrounded and killed two thugs suspected of having fired on Cano from a motorbike, but everyone knew that the true authors of the crime were still at large. The drug cartel has turned cocaine exports into an estimated \$8-billion-a-

year growth industry. Thanks to drugs, Colombia has enjoyed a tenuous and lopsided prosperity. And after years of drug-related murders, Colombian society had become largely indifferent to violence. But Cano was such a widely respected public figure that his death seemed finally to shock public opinion into an awareness of some truths about the trade: namely, that drugs have infested every sector of society, not only with money but also with terror; and that journalists are paying the price for being among the few who dare to speak out. They are subject to a fatal form of censorship.

"The problem is that, in the absence of any systematic official response, the press has acquired a leading role in the so-called war against drugs," Enrique Santos Calderón said after Cano's murder. Santos is Sunday editor and a columnist at his family's newspaper, *El Tiempo*, Colombia's largest. "That frontline role really doesn't belong to us, and it has made us very vulnerable."

Like his colleagues at *El Espectador*, Santos will not disclose how many reporters work his paper's drug beat, or their names. Lately, most drug stories in the Colombian press have been unsigned, and few cocaine reporters will speak for attribution about their tricky and frustrating assignment. The remarkable fact is that the drug story continues to be covered at all. Although not all of the twenty murdered journalists covered drugs, it is commonly assumed that drug reporters are putting their lives in danger with every story. They accept the risk "out of fascination with the story," says one. "And out of a conviction we arrived at earlier than the rest of society, that drugs are not just a U.S. problem," says another. But, he adds, intimidation has had its effect. "I would say that I can't write eighty percent of what I know."

Yet in the months following Cano's murder *El Espectador* continued to publish stories — about drug-mafia parties, for example, where security was provided by local police. *Semana* ran a story asserting that reputed drug lord Pablo Escobar Gaviria had been briefly detained last November at a road checkpoint near Medellín — Colombia's drug capital — then allowed to go free in exchange for 10,000 to 40,000 U.S. dollars.

Fear and proximity have combined to produce a unique working relationship between the U.S. and Colombian press. Local reporters are extraordinarily generous with their wealth of knowledge about the drug world, knowing that what they can't write firsthand, they can comment on after it has been written up in the U.S. press.

Recently, all the major Colombian papers reprinted an encyclopedic four-part *Miami*

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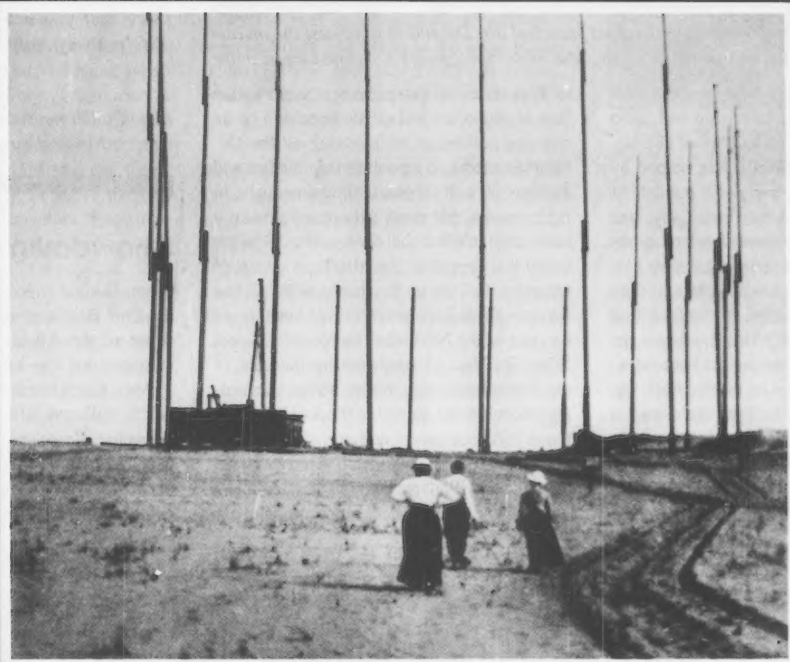
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Martyred: Colombian journalists marched last December to protest the murder of anti-drug crusader Guillermo Cano, who edited the country's second-largest daily.

Herald series on the birth and growth of the Colombian drug cartel; television and radio also gave the *Herald*'s series a lot of airtime. "In many cases, the *Herald* was helped by journalists who were leery of publishing some of the information they had," says one of the *Herald* reporters most involved in reporting and writing the series. (Like his Colombian colleagues, he has not had a by-line on his most recent articles, and asked that his name not be printed.) This symbiotic relationship has been rewarding for both sides. "The *Herald* series had a tremendous impact," says Santos. "Before, we'd had a constant rain of fragmentary information. This was the first time Colombian society was able to have a comprehensive vision of the drug world."

That series was also the first step in what Santos and other journalists hope will be an ongoing collaboration involving all the Colombian media. By pooling information and making sure it appears simultaneously in many media, the press is hoping to make it more difficult for the drug mafia to target individual reporters. In March, a group of reporters, passing up the chance of individual scoops, pooled resources to put together an account of the November murder of Colonel Jaime Ramírez, a hardworking member of the Colombian antinarcotics police. According to documents quoted in the article, which ran in nineteen papers and on radio and TV, Ramírez wrote his own death sentence when he staged a 1984 raid on "Tranquilandia" — a gigantic cocaine-refining complex run

jointly by the four major drug-trading groups. Some reporters grumbled that the article pulled its punches on the degree of police involvement with the murder. Others were happy that the story survived the internal squabbling and the "environmental fear" prevalent on the drug beat since Cano's death. "We hope that this kind of collaboration will allow us to continue covering the story, but you never know," says one. "We're always waiting for the next murder."

Alma Guillermoprieto

Alma Guillermoprieto is Newsweek's bureau chief in Rio de Janeiro.

Showdown at Pine Bluff

When Donald Mace Williams, the editor of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*, walked into the office of the Arkansas daily's new general manager one day last February, he says he "pretty much knew what was going to happen." Williams, fifty-seven, had come to the *Commercial* two years before because of the paper's reputation for "ethics and high standards." But when the paper, which had been owned by the same family for 105 years, was

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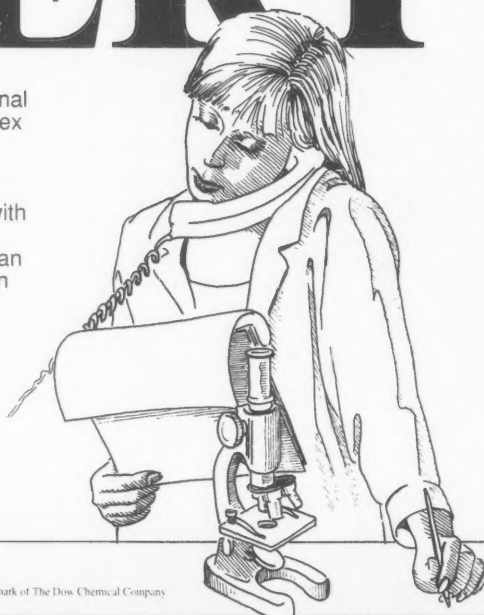
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sold in January to the Donrey Media Group, Williams dusted off his résumé. And a month after the sale, here he was headed for a showdown over what he saw as an intrusion by management into newsroom business.

Earlier in the day, Dan P. Smith, the new general manager brought in by Donrey, had fired the *Commercial's* advertising manager, who had had the job for sixteen years and was well-known around town. The *Commercial* planned to report on the firing, but when a reporter interviewed Smith and asked why the ad manager had been let go, Smith insisted that the article say only that he had been replaced. Williams wanted the ad manager's side of the story. He said the *Commercial's* policy was to write about itself as it did about every other business in town.

"Smith said, 'Well that's changed now,'" Williams says. "He told me, 'I'm the general manager and I run the paper.'" Williams replied that he could not order a reporter to write a story and leave out what he considered to be essential information. Smith told him to clean out his desk.

"This was a matter of suppression of the news," says Williams, who now writes for Long Island's *Newsday*. "I didn't feel I had a choice." Smith sees it differently: "What Don did was take a fairly minor issue and

make a big deal out of it, so he could lose his job over journalistic ethics. And that's a bunch of crap." The *Commercial* reported the firing of both its editor and its ad manager the next day, including — with Smith's approval — their sides of the story.

The incident wasn't the only disagreement over policy that Williams and Smith had that day. Williams objected to Smith's having asked to read in advance an account of a speech Smith had given to the local Rotary Club. He also protested Smith's insistence, weeks before, on running a press release from an advertiser that Williams had spiked.

Smith says he never asked to change the story on his speech, but that, as general manager and acting publisher, he has the right to read what goes in the paper. He further complains that, under Williams, the *Commercial* had gone out of its way to avoid running press releases from business firms — especially from advertisers. "What kind of journalism is that?" he asks.

The *Commercial*, an afternoon paper with a circulation of 21,000, has a reputation far beyond its size. For years, its emphasis on solid reporting and crisp writing has drawn young reporters willing to work long hours for low pay in exchange for valuable basic training, and some of its reporters and editors

have gone on to top papers. Gene Foreman, a former executive editor at the *Commercial*, is now managing editor of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. Joe Stroud, another former editor in Pine Bluff, is editor and senior vice president of the *Detroit Free Press*.

Once a bustling cotton port on the Arkansas River, Pine Bluff is now an industrial town with an image problem. A 1985 quality-of-life survey rated it next to last on a list of 330 U.S. cities. The chamber of commerce struggles to improve Pine Bluff's dreary reputation, and the *Commercial* promotes civic



Steve Kessner/The Arkansas Gazette

Chained: Ex-editor Donald Williams on the day the Donrey Media Group took over

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pride, but it has never seen itself primarily as a booster.

Some people at the *Commercial* believe Donrey would have found an excuse to dismiss Williams in any case. Others think Williams overreacted. Paul Greenberg is the editorial page editor and winner of the Pulitzer Prize in 1969 for editorial writing. He was a finalist for the prize in 1978 and 1986. He calls Williams "about the best editor we've had in my roughly twenty-five years at the *Commercial*." But Greenberg doesn't think the paper's outlook is as grim as Williams painted it. "I don't think that most of the staff agreed that the paper was lost on the basis of those issues. I share that view."

Roy Reed, however, a former *New York Times* reporter who teaches journalism at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, says he worries about the future of the *Commercial* because of what happened at another Arkansas paper Donrey took over, *The Springdale News*. Reed says he's watched the chain "squeeze and squeeze" what had been a "better-than-average small paper." It remains a good paper, he says, only because of a dedicated news staff.

Dan Smith came to the *Commercial* after four years as general manager at *The Springdale News*. A former *News* employee remembers Smith as a "company man" who

cared more about advertising and marketing than he did about news. When he took over in Springdale, the *News* gained a marketing director, a radio jingle, promotional coffee cups and windbreakers, and a weekly shopper. The paper sponsored a chili cook-off and five- and ten-kilometer runs. Reporters began to feel they were "filling in around the ads," says another former *News* reporter. "When push came to shove, advertising came out over news every time." The *News* had covered some of the state legislative sessions in Little Rock, but, under Donrey, travel to the state capital and elsewhere was reduced.

Smith says the criticism of Donrey is unfounded. The group, which is named for its eighty-year-old founder, Donald W. Reynolds, is based in Fort Smith, Arkansas, and Las Vegas and owns 131 newspapers, including fifty-seven dailies, as well as interests in radio, television, cable, and 11,000 billboards. (*Forbes* estimates Reynolds's wealth at \$500 million.) The chain has operated high-quality papers in small markets for years, Smith says, adding that circulation increased every year he was general manager at Springdale and that the weekly shopper was "very successful." Smith says he believes that business and news operations should remain separate, but "you can separate the two to a point where it doesn't make

any sense." If a newspaper doesn't make money, he says, reporters won't have jobs.

At the *Commercial*, the building has a new coat of paint, and the paper has a new promotion director, changes similar to those in Smith's early days at Springdale. Donrey has also spruced up the newsroom and ordered a new press that will be producing color by fall. "A lot of investment is being made, and I'm confident about the continued vigor of the paper," says Paul Greenberg.

Some reporters are concerned, however, about the elimination of the *Commercial*'s second edition, which quietly disappeared in the spring, and hints about the need for more "positive" stories. They say that cutting back to one edition leaves them with an 11 A.M. deadline, making coverage of the trials, meetings, and lunchtime speeches that are the staples of a small daily less timely.

Smith says he plans for the *Commercial* to "cover the total community." He says the paper will place more emphasis on local news and that this will sometimes mean more positive stories. "People are sick and tired of reading what they consider to be bad news," he says. "There's more to report out there."

Michael Haddigan

Michael Haddigan is a reporter for The Arkansas Gazette in Little Rock.

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COMMENT

The Hart affair

by JOHN B. JUDIS

Sooner or later Gary Hart would probably have destroyed his own candidacy. Hart, *The Washington Post's* Meg Greenfield wrote in retrospect, was "living a life he could not justify or reveal." But the inevitability of Hart's political demise does not justify the press's singular role in precipitating it. In reporting about Hart, the mainstream press departed from its past standards in covering a candidate's private life and displayed unwonted recklessness in reporting what it had discovered.

Prior to Sunday, May 3 — the day *The Miami Herald* wrote that model Donna Rice had spent a night in Hart's Washington, D.C., townhouse — the press had revealed potentially embarrassing details about public officials' private lives only if such details were germane to another, patently newsworthy story. The press looked into Senator Edward Kennedy's womanizing only after Chappaquiddick, and it reported former Representative Robert Bauman's homosexual tendencies — which Washington reporters had known about for some time — only after he had been arrested for soliciting sex from a minor.

In the case of Gary Hart, however, *Newsweek*, *The Washington Post*, and several other publications began airing rumors about womanizing even before they had any facts to go on. Worse still, these rumors seem to have come primarily from the press itself.

Washington political reporters were fascinated with Hart's sex life, partly because of a streak of prurience, which they share with other Americans, partly because they are always on the lookout for a front-runner's fatal flaw. "The number one parlor game among Washington journalists was, 'How do we get Gary Hart?'" says John Buckley, press secretary for presidential candidate Jack Kemp.

It was *Newsweek* that, in effect, launched the story. In its April 13 issue, on the stands a week before Hart announced his candidacy, the newsweekly published a profile of Hart written by its chief political correspondent, Howard Fineman. Fineman reported that Hart had been "haunted by rumors of womanizing" and quoted former Hart adviser John McEvoy as saying, "He's always in jeopardy of having the sex issue raised if he can't keep his pants on."

Fineman defends his having reported the rumors on the ground that they were germane to Hart's campaign. Hart's womanizing, Fineman says, "was the talk of politically active people across the country." But outside a fairly nar-

row circle of people in Washington, made up largely of political reporters and campaign consultants, Hart's womanizing was not an issue. Prominent Democrats with whom I spoke in Iowa and New Hampshire echoed the sentiments of Joseph Grandmaison, the chairman of the New Hampshire Democratic party, who told me, "I've known Gary for fifteen years and I've never had another political activist come up to me and make mention of it. The only people who mentioned it to me were the reporters."

Fineman himself acknowledges that one thing that spurred him to write about Hart's womanizing was a reporters' dinner with a Republican presidential candidate. The reporters, Fineman says, "spent most of the time talking about when someone was going to write about Gary Hart's private life." The dinner, Fineman says, "got me to thinking that *someone* had to broach the subject."

Fineman's story, by establishing the rumors themselves as news, drove the story to the next stage: the attempt by the Washington press corps to get comments from Hart. Hart planned to announce his candidacy in Colorado on Monday, April 13. The night before, the press corps arrived from Washington and a group of reporters dined together at a Denver restaurant. T.R. Reid of *The Washington Post's* Denver bureau says he was surprised by the conversation. "There had always been talk of Hart's womanizing," Reid recalls. "But I didn't realize it was topic A among reporters." The *Post's* editors also obviously regarded it as a hot topic because, on April 13, the paper published a Style section profile of Hart and his wife in which McEvoy's "pants on" quote was repeated, and the author wrote that "rumors of Hart's womanizing persist and could emerge as a problem for his campaign."

On April 14, the day after he had declared his candidacy, Hart held a press conference at which he announced that, if he were elected, he would raise taxes. It was a provocative announcement, and Reid made it the focus of the story he filed that day. After the press conference, Hart and the reporters took off on a campaign swing. On the plane, the Washington reporters prodded Hart to respond to the rumors about his womanizing. "This was all the reporters were interested in," Reid says. "It overwhelmed the fact that the candidate had come out for a tax increase." Tom Fiedler, political editor of *The Miami Herald*, later wrote about the scene aboard the plane: "As his campaign plane flew toward yet another stop, the press demanded to talk with Hart on the subject that had dominated reporters' conversation for

John B. Judis is a senior editor of *In These Times* and the author of a forthcoming biography of William F. Buckley, Jr.

days: his sex life. . . . 'Anybody want to talk about ideas?' said an annoyed Hart."

Finally, Hart asked *Time's* Laurence Barrett whether he thought the rumors were being spread by rival campaigns. The Washington reporters, Reid wrote on April 15, "dove for their portable computer keyboards" and made Hart's concern the lead of their stories.

Hart was consistent in rebuffing reporters who asked him about the rumors. When, speaking to *New York Times* reporter E. J. Dionne, he stupidly dared reporters to "put a tail on me," he was clearly not literally inviting the press to stake out his house, but expressing irritation about coverage that focused, not on issues, but on his private life. "Sure, there was exasperation in what he said," Dionne told me later. Reid, who knew Hart from the campaign, is also convinced that Hart's statement implied no invitation. "People say, 'sue me,'" Reid says. "That doesn't mean they are inviting them to sue."

The press, however, was not to be deterred. It had made — or sought to make — marital fidelity the criterion for Hart's fitness to be president. "In my mind," Tom Fiedler told me, "there was no doubt that if he in fact was carrying on a relationship at a time when the national press had put him on notice that it was central to his candidacy, this raised major questions — indeed, the major question — about Gary Hart's fitness to be president."

Once *The Miami Herald* had broken the story, pundits and editorialists rushed to defend the paper's behavior. *The New York Times* cited *Newsweek's* earlier rumor-mongering to justify the *Herald's* stakeout. The *Herald's* story was "eminently justified" because of "concerns about 'womanizing'" that had "dogged Mr. Hart's candidacy," the *Times* editorialized on May 6. The *Times* asserted that the issue was "not philandering" but "the candidate's judgment and integrity." Other columnists and editorial writers claimed that philandering was the issue, because it had a direct bearing on how Hart would conduct himself as president. Womanizing, Ellen Goodman wrote in her syndicated column, reveals "something about a man's capacity for deception, vulnerability to exposure, fascination with risk-taking." *New Republic* editor Michael Kinsley wrote, "The same juices that drive [politicians] to run for office drive many to horse around and may drive some to express themselves in other ways, like starting wars. This needs watching. They don't call it power lust for nothing."

Such explanations were at best superficial and, at worst, as in Kinsley's case, just plain silly. There is indeed a connection between people's private lives and their public performance — a connection that biographers seek to establish — but it is not an obvious and direct one that permits inferences to be drawn simply from the fact that a candidate is a faithful husband or a philanderer. The philanderers Harding and FDR had as little in common as the faithful husbands Nixon and Carter. Simply stating the fact of a candidate's philandering does not increase the public's understanding of how that candidate would shape up as president, but, rather, appeals to its fascination with sex.

If the press's preoccupation with Hart's sex life raises questions about the soundness of its news judgment, the performance of the two newspapers that played principal roles in ending Hart's candidacy raises questions about the journalistic practices each employed. Whether or not what the newspapers reported subsequently turned out to be true is irrelevant in evaluating these practices; what is relevant is what they knew and could prove when they published their stories.

Consider *The Miami Herald's* explosive May 3 story, which began: "Gary Hart, the Democratic presidential candidate who has dismissed allegations of womanizing, spent Friday night and most of Saturday in his Capitol Hill townhouse with a young woman who flew from Miami and met him." Hart had told the *Herald* that Donna Rice had left from the back entrance of his townhouse "ten or fifteen minutes" after they had arrived on Friday night at eleven. But the *Herald* insisted that "Hart's explanation was not consistent with what was witnessed by a team of *Miami Herald* reporters who conducted surveillance of the townhouse from the time the woman arrived in Washington from Miami until the time of the interview."

As it turned out, however, the *Herald* did not have a "team" watching the townhouse during the time Hart claimed that Rice had left, but only a single reporter, Jim McGee. And McGee could not have seen anyone leave from the back — the usual exit from this townhouse. Also, the *Herald's* story failed to mention that Hart's friend William Broadhurst had told the paper's reporters that he and Hart had driven Rice and another woman around suburban Washington on Saturday afternoon — a period during which only *Herald* photographer Brian Smith had a clear view of people entering and leaving Hart's house. On May 10 the *Herald* dutifully revealed that Smith had followed one maroon car, in which he mistakenly believed Hart and Rice were riding, but had overlooked another maroon car — it turned out to have been Broadhurst's — which had been parked in front of Hart's house and had then departed — possibly with Broadhurst, Hart, and the two women inside. Indeed, a delicatessen manager in Alexandria, Virginia, told the *Los Angeles Times* that Hart, another man, and two women had come into his store on Saturday afternoon, at a time when the *Herald* had claimed that Hart and Rice had been together in Hart's townhouse.

Newspapers, of course, cannot avoid making some mistakes, but the *Herald* was well aware of how high the stakes were: Fiedler told Ted Koppel on *Nightline* that he believed the *Herald's* story would eliminate Hart as a presidential contender. The newspaper's desire to be first with the story, however, was apparently greater than its desire to make sure there were no holes in it. If the *Herald's* investigative team had waited to confirm the details of the story, Fiedler told me, Hart and Broadhurst "could have worked out an alibi, and they could have called *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* and said, 'This is what *The Miami Herald* asked me, and we're not going to talk to *The Miami Herald*, we're going to talk to you.'"

In the week to come, the *Herald* changed its account of its own reporting almost daily, finally providing a definitive account on the following Sunday, two days after Hart withdrew his candidacy. On May 3, Fiedler had told *The Washington Post* that "there were a minimum of two people who watched through Friday night and five of us at various times on Saturday." By May 10 the *Herald* was acknowledging that McGee was alone during the critical period on Friday and that no one was watching the house between three and five A.M. Saturday morning.

On May 4, refuting Hart's charge that the *Herald* had turned down Broadhurst's offer to let the reporters speak to the women, investigations editor Jim Savage, who was part of the stakeout, told *The Washington Post*, "That's totally inaccurate. We were dying to talk to the women. He [Broadhurst] said they were asleep and that he'd talk to them in the morning and see what they wanted to do." By May 10, the story had changed. "Broadhurst told Fiedler that, if he came right over, 'the girls' would be there . . .," the *Herald* reported. "Fiedler, however, felt that Broadhurst's offer came with a huge escape clause — the women might be there, but they would refuse to answer questions."

Fiedler might have been right: the women might not have talked. But, given the potential impact of the story on national politics — not to speak of the impact on Hart, his wife, and their family — it seems irresponsible not to have accepted Broadhurst's offer.

Like *The Miami Herald*, *The Washington Post* decided to investigate a tip on Hart's sexual activities. But, while the newspaper did the reporting, it confined itself to stating on May 8 that it had "presented a top campaign aide with documented evidence of a recent liaison between Hart and a Washington woman with whom he has had a long-term relationship." The *Post*'s decision to do the story, and the way it handled it, raised as many questions as did the *Herald*'s decision to publish its findings.

Even before the *Miami Herald* story broke, *The Washington Post*'s top editors and political writers had met several times to discuss how they should handle the rumors of Hart's womanizing. Several *Post* reporters and editors knew Hart; Bob Woodward had even lived with him during a time when Hart separated from his wife. Some of them also knew personally the woman with whom the paper would later say he had a "long-term relationship." And the newspaper had received tips about Hart's sexual adventures on the campaign trail. At David Broder's suggestion, the editors finally decided not to do anything specifically about Hart's womanizing, but rather to ask David Maraniss, who had covered Hart, to prepare a general sketch of the candidate's character.

On Tuesday, May 5, however, political reporter Thomas B. Edsall received a tip that, he says, "was clearly of major significance in connection with the issues raised by the *Miami Herald* story."

Edsall declines to further characterize the tip, but, according to sources, it consisted of a report from a private

Drawing by Robert Weber; © 1987 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.



"It's the *Miami Herald*. They saw you go in the front door yesterday, but they haven't seen you come out."

investigator that Hart was having an affair with a Washington woman. The investigator presented photographic evidence that showed Hart entering and leaving the woman's home. Benjamin Bradlee, the *Post*'s executive editor, has confirmed that the pictures did not show any direct sexual relationship between the man and the woman.

Edsall did not want to do the story himself and merely passed the tip on to his editor. "It was not material that I was comfortable with as a newsman," he says. Why, then, did the *Post* decide to pursue the story? As the *Post* itself editorialized on May 5, at the core of the scandal were charges that Hart had been "playing around." Other publications, including *The New York Times*, had drawn conclusions about Hart's character that were based on the assumption that he was a sexual adventurer. The *Post* editors, however, regarded Hart's relationship with this woman as being different in character from his relationship with Donna Rice; it was, Bradlee says, "more permanent." And while this relationship shed light on the state of Hart's marriage, it shed little light on the issues raised by his fling with Rice — unless the story the press was after was simply about sex. But the *Post* went ahead anyway.

Its motives appear to have been a combination of unreflective scoop journalism and anger at Hart. While political reporter Paul Taylor, who was assigned to the story, saw it as an extension of the *Miami Herald* story, executive editor Bradlee says that the *Post*'s decision was based not so much on the precedent established by the *Herald* as on Hart's attacks on the credibility of the press. "Much more than the Miami thing was his speech at the publishers' association and at [former *New York Times* executive] Sydney Gruson's [fundraiser], where he said he was being stabbed in the back by the press," Bradlee says.

Taylor went to Hanover, New Hampshire, on Wednesday, May 6, to cover a press conference Hart had called. When he asked Hart during the late-afternoon press con-

ference, "Have you ever committed adultery?" Taylor was already laying the groundwork for a story that would be based on the photographic evidence the *Post* had obtained. "It was in my mind," Taylor says. "If he had said 'no,' that was an answer that might have become part of the other story."

But Taylor did not get the final order to confront Hart with the *Post*'s findings until he talked with Bradlee at eight that night. Afterwards, he set off for Littleton, New Hampshire, where he had been told the candidate and his staff were staying. In a motel lounge, he ran into another *Post* political reporter, Bill Peterson. Taylor says he was apprehensive about confronting Hart with charges of adultery and he asked Peterson to do the story with him, telling Peterson about the evidence the *Post* had of Hart's liaison. Peterson, however, was not convinced that the evidence was sufficient to justify confronting the candidate. "I was assured there was firm confirmation," Peterson says, "but there wasn't enough for me to be bothering a presidential candidate at eleven o'clock."

Peterson was refusing to help Taylor with a story that Bradlee believed was important. "It was a very gutsy thing to do," T. R. Reid says of Peterson's refusal. Peterson later claimed that he had not been aware of all the details that Taylor knew, but Taylor insists that he did not withhold

anything from Peterson. "I wouldn't have held anything back," he says.

Working alone, Taylor told Hart's press secretary, Kevin Sweeney, that he wanted to talk to Hart. He said he wanted Hart to comment on what he said the paper had already established as fact. He told Sweeney, Taylor says, that "we had gathered the essential facts, and the only thing missing was a comment from Hart." Sweeney confirms this. "They presented it to me as having already been established," he says.

But was it? Why weren't the facts sufficient to convince the other *Post* reporter on the scene? If the principal evidence was photographic, and if it did not reveal actual sexual relations between the man and the woman, then was the paper soliciting Hart's reaction to something its editors assumed, but did not know, to be true? Short of the *Post* revealing all of its evidence, which it has declined to do, these questions cannot be answered, but they suggest at least the possibility that the *Post* misled the Hart campaign on an issue that precipitated Hart's withdrawal from the campaign.

According to a senior aide in the Hart campaign, the *Post*'s query "accelerated" Hart's withdrawal. In talking to Sweeney, Taylor did not threaten to publish the story if

Darts and laurels

Dart: to *The Wall Street Journal* and staff reporter Clare Ansberry, for an underdeveloped page-one piece on Eastman Kodak's uphill battle against such Japanese rivals as Fuji. Focusing in its lead on veteran *Sports Illustrated* photographer Walter Iooss, Jr.'s refusal to participate in Kodak's Day in the Life of America project because he would have been required to use Kodak film — something the photographer "just couldn't do" since "he prefers what he describes as Fuji's superior color quality" — the April 2 article failed to note that Iooss was formerly on Fuji's payroll as a television spokesman and official Olympics photographer and that he has done free-lance work for the company since that time.

Laurel: to *Mother Jones*, for an April article revealing that Senator Steve Symms, Republican of Idaho, was one of three congressional candidates (the other two lost) who, during their 1986 campaigns for reelection, had each received \$1,000 contributions from the German-American National Political Action Committee, a neo-Nazi group headed by Hans Schmidt, a naturalized U.S. citizen who served in both the Hitler Youth and the Waffen S.S. Following the magazine's disclosure, Symms, who said that he had been unaware of the GAN-PAC's anti-Semitic, white supremacist leanings, announced in early April that he would donate \$500 to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and another \$500 to the Idaho Holocaust Council, much to GAN-PAC's disgust. (All-too-familiar footnote: On May 18, *The New York Times* reported the Symms story

in an item on its Washington Talk page, without crediting the San Francisco-based *Mother Jones*. On May 19, the *San Francisco Chronicle* picked it up, crediting *The New York Times*.)

Dart: to *The Miami Herald*, for a marketing campaign marred by a pandering political tone. In an effort to woo the many Cuban exiles in its circulation area, the *Herald* in a March 9 ad "joined with the Cuban American National Foundation" to exclusively offer new and renewing subscribers a free cassette of "Yo Vuelvo a Ti" ("I'll Return to You"), a fundraising song created by Cuban musicians in exile and produced by the foundation. "Help the exiled Cubans in other countries with your subscription to *The Miami Herald*," read the paper's Spanish-language ad. "Each subscription will endow a ray of hope on those who suffer in other parts. Join in this song of love by subscribing to *The Miami Herald* today." Although the paper did not further elaborate on the work of the group to which it had paid some \$30,000 for cassettes of its "song of love," other papers have: according to an analysis in *The New York Times*, the CANF is a powerful right-wing lobbying organization whose agenda reaches well beyond Cuba. "It is," the *Times*'s Jon Nordheimer wrote last July, "one of the Reagan administration's best friends on the formation and conduct of policy in Central America and is a staunch supporter of aid to the rebels trying to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua."

Dart: to the Riverside, California, *Press-Enterprise*. As



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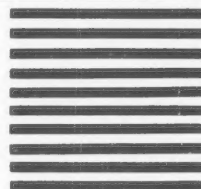
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Hart did not withdraw, Sweeney says, but Sweeney came away with an "intuitive" understanding that the *Post's* decision whether or not to publish the story hinged on whether or not Hart would drop out of the campaign. Sweeney believed that "if Hart is out of the race, this will no longer be a story." When he called Hart that night, he told him about the investigator's report. Hart asked him, "Is it a story?" — meaning, according to Sweeney, did Sweeney think the *Post* was planning to run it. Sweeney replied, "Yes, it's a story." According to Sweeney, Hart responded, "This thing is never going to end, is it? Look, let's just go home."

The *Post* decided not to run the story about Hart's liaison, but instead to report that it had evidence of it. The *Post's* decision, while commendable in that it kept the woman's name out of print, nonetheless lent credence to the view that the paper was engaged in high-stakes political poker rather than journalism.

Taylor adamantly defended his role, but he admitted later that he had lingering doubts about the entire process. "Before the voters ever got a chance to vote, the only candidate who has established himself gets on a five-day roller coaster with the press and is out of the race," Taylor says. "I don't think we did wrong, but I wonder about how much power we have."

sponsor of a recent Newspaper in Education Month essay contest in which seventh and eighth graders were asked to write on "how newspapers help to guarantee every citizen's rights given to us in the Constitution," the paper unblushingly awarded first prize to a 170-word entry that (unlike the runners-up) failed to address the question — but did manage to praise the *Press-Enterprise's* accuracy, fairness, and trustworthiness and to mention its name no less than five times. (Following publication of the winning essays, however, the paper did have the grace to print several letters from outraged readers, one of which concluded, "I must thank you for this perfect example of prejudice because it provided an excellent lesson for seventh and eighth graders on the unreliability of the news media.")

Laurel: to *The Wall Street Journal* and staff reporter Walt Bogdanich, for a stress-producing series (February 2-3) on the unhealthy state of the nation's \$20 billion-a-year medical laboratory industry, provider of blood counts, urine analyses, pap smears, and the like to trusting patients who seldom suspect that — what with so many technicians who are overworked or undertrained, and so much equipment that is poorly designed and maintained — the results of those tests have a shockingly high chance of being just plain wrong. Based on thousands of pages of government reports, court records, and test data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act; on interviews with doctors, patients, malpractice lawyers, industry representatives, and health policy analysts; and on his own private experiment (in which he submitted five simultaneously drawn blood samples to five different labs in New York City and got five different cho-

In a political system in which parties have diminishing importance, the press is the principal — and sometimes the only — means by which voters learn about public officials. If the press fails to perform its function responsibly, how can the public reach an informed decision about who should represent it?

In justifying the press's coverage of Hart, some columnists wrote as if the press's function were merely to mirror the total reality of a candidate and his campaign, whatever it may consist of. To withhold information, *Newsweek's* Jonathan Alter wrote, is "elitist." *The New Republic's* Kinsley wrote, "We are witnessing the breakdown, at long last, of an antidemocratic conspiracy among the Washington elite of journalists and politicians . . . to keep information from the mass of voters."

But the press must always make choices about what to report, and what it reports it must interpret. Journalism, former *Washington Post* publisher Philip Graham used to say, is "the first rough draft of history." If the mainstream press is going to report a candidate's philandering or his bedroom behavior, then the press will either have to convince its readers that what it is printing is directly relevant to political life or it will have to suffer the charge of sensationalism and scandal-mongering.

lesterol counts), Bogdanich's report points to the government's laxity in allowing the industry to "enjoy a freedom from regulatory scrutiny not accorded even to hairdressers."

Dart: to the Columbus, Ohio, *Dispatch*, for its egocentric May 21 coverage of the excellence-in-journalism awards announced by the Central Ohio chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi. The paper detailed each and every award won by itself — two first places, three second places, two third places, and three honorable mentions — but completely ignored top awards to three local magazines, a radio station, and a suburban chain.

Dart: to *USA Today* and Ann Landers, for hopeless recidivism. In its March 2 edition, the paper once again muddled its front-page Newsline ("A Quick Read on the News") with a boldfaced flag alerting readers to a "SPECIAL AD: Weekly series of messages from Shearson-Lehman Bros. Inc. begins today. 2B." (See Darts and Laurels, September/October 1985 and January/February 1986.) And in a recent column in which she gave a plug to "Jules Furth, president of Furth and Co. Funeral Direction," Landers neglected — once again — to mention that the Chicago undertaker also happens to be her former son-in-law. (See Darts and Laurels, May/June 1976 and January/February 1984.)

Dart: to John R. Starr, managing editor of the *Arkansas Democrat*, for his "Dear Reader" columns of April 24, 28, May 1, 2, 4, 9, 14, 15, and 23 — all of which managed, one way or another, to mention, quote from, or otherwise promote his own recently published book. (The most recent plug was tucked into a column criticizing a television news show for "shoddy exercises in journalism.") ■

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Additional information about the awards is available from The Secretariat, The Rolex Awards for Enterprise, P.O. Box 178, 1211 Geneva 26, Switzerland.



ROLEX

THE TRIAL OF NEW YORK'S *DAILY NEWS*

A report on an unprecedented court action
— brought by four black journalists —
that answered one question and raised a host of others

by JAN ALBERT

The *Daily News* discrimination trial had everything the Baby M case had, except the baby. It was ugly and it was mean and it was sad.

It had former friends and colleagues trading bitter accusations from the witness stand. There were charismatic star witnesses on both sides and they were playing for high stakes. "If we lose, it could set affirmative action back a very long time," the plaintiffs contended. On the other side, the reputation of a great American newspaper with an estimated 30 percent minority readership hung in the balance. It was black against white, the corporation against four individuals, and a scrappy, go-for-the-throat attorney against a well-behaved white-collar law firm.

The two sides didn't see anything the same way, including what the case was about. For one of the *Daily News* lawyers it was "simply a matter of four people holding up the *Daily News*." For Susan Singer, an attorney for the reporters, it was a case of the *Daily News* holding down four people the paper had hired primarily because of their color and had then abandoned.

When the jury came back late on the night of April 15, after nine weeks of

testimony, with a decision that "New York's hometown paper" had discriminated, it left many people back in the city room dismayed and wondering what the verdict meant for the *Daily News*, for black journalists, and for the newspaper business.

The four plaintiffs — David Hardy, Steven Duncan, Joan Shepard, and Causewell Vaughan, all still working at the *Daily News* as reporters or editors — claimed they had been passed over for promotions and good assignments from the 1970s through 1982 because they are black. In court, they portrayed a pervasively racist working environment (kind of an Irish stew with Italian seasoning) in which casual and thoughtless slurs filled the air and advancement was based on the crony system with no way into the in-crowd for a black man or woman unless you were willing to sell your soul. Their funky, freewheeling, jive-talking lead attorney, Daniel Alterman, said his clients were victims of "stone racism and stone character assassination." He concluded his four-and-a-half-hour closing statement by telling the six-member jury (including one black woman) that they could "make history like the Supreme Court did in *Brown versus The Board of Ed*" and said they were the only ones who could bring the *News* "kicking and

screaming into the twentieth century."

The paper's high-priced team of lawyers, for their part, maintained that the *Daily News* was a pioneer in equal opportunity and the victim of "a false and malicious charge." Their main tactic consisted of depicting the plaintiffs as four frustrated people who had failed to ascend the career ladder at the *News*, not because of bias, but because, as journalists, they just weren't very good.

Thomas Morrison, the Lincolnesque lead attorney for the paper, detailed the four reporters' absences and their disappointing performance despite all the chances they had been afforded. He characterized them as four average journalists who were lucky to have jobs on the *Daily News*. He went on to say that what the plaintiffs took to be racial slurs were, in some cases, poor "attempts at humor" and part and parcel of the "rough-and-tumble" atmosphere of the newsroom.

Both sides claimed that the numbers backed them up. Wetting his finger to turn the pages of a never-ending series of salary graphs and employment statistics, Morrison referred several times to "our list of minority successes" (columnist Bob Herbert and a few others). He conceded that the *Daily News* had been a little slow on the affirmative action uptake but claimed that when Mi-

Jan Albert is a former CBS News producer who lives in New York.

chael O'Neill became managing editor in 1968, it was with the understanding that he would revitalize the paper, in part by aggressively recruiting minorities, and that, in fact, by 1983, there were thirty-six black reporters on staff. (None of these reporters appeared to testify for the *Daily News*.)

In her closing remarks, Susan Singer, the attorney handling most of the statistical evidence for the plaintiffs, seemed to score a point when she said, "I've heard some incredible things in this courtroom over the past couple of months, but one of the high points was hearing the *Daily News* lawyers tell you that the *Daily News* was a pioneer in moving people up the career ladder in the editorial department. . . . The statistics you have heard are complicated and sometimes boring, but I do know that there is one simple statistic. . . . It's the number zero. The number of blacks who were promoted into management at the *Daily News* until this lawsuit was filed was zero." (Earlier, Morrison had argued that the current four black managers "was a whole lot more than none," particularly in light of the fact that some 60 percent of the daily papers around the country have no minority reporters.)

About the plaintiffs

Was this the right suit brought by the wrong people? The story that emerged in court seemed to justify the charge of racism at the *Daily News*, but this charge was blunted by the messy personal and professional problems of a couple of the plaintiffs. Perhaps the messiest were David Hardy's.



DAVID HARDY

Hardy is "one of the most fascinating people you'll ever have a conversation with," says Gil Spencer, who became editor of the *Daily News* in 1984. "He's smart, articulate, an intriguing guy — you know, he's a player."

David Hardy is widely acknowledged to be the lead player in this suit. It was

Hardy's sense of mission — his obsession, if you will — that kept the issue alive for the past seven years and made it the first civil rights case brought by journalists against a publication to reach open court.

At the outset of the trial, Morrison told the members of the jury that they would find Hardy charming and handsome, but, he said, he would show them another side — a man with a "towering ego," a man with a deep core of anger whose "warped perspective" on the world colored his reporting and rendered it unreliable, a man who linked every professional disappointment to race.

Morrison read from some extremely hostile and vaguely threatening letters Hardy had written to several people who had criticized his reporting (including a judge on his beat) and from a deposition in which Hardy called virtually every *Daily News* editor he had worked with a racist. Morrison went down a long list drawn from Hardy's deposition:

"What about Mr. Blood? Would you characterize him as being bigoted?"

"Absolutely. 'Racist' is the word I prefer. . . ."

"Michael O'Neill?"

"Absolutely."

"Jim Weighart?"

"Mr. Morrison, absolutely. I wish I had a few adverbs to throw in there to add. . . ."

Hardy is not an easy guy to understand, especially when he won't talk to you. When he learned I was covering this trial for the *Columbia Journalism Review*, he refused to cooperate because, he said, he and his three colleagues had begged CJR to cover their story for the past seven years and had been rebuffed. "Now we've won without them." [Editors' note: An article on the discrimination suit — "Inside the *News*: Discrimination at Work?" — ran as a sidebar to "*Daily News*: Can New Team Rout Rupe?" CJR, May/June 1985.] Despite the win, Hardy added, "we continue to be lynched journalistically by the so-called liberal white-dominated press and I'm not going to let them do it without a fight."

How did Dave Hardy get so mad?

When Hardy went to work for the *News* back in 1967, executives at the paper thought "he was a very fine man." He switched to *The Washington Post* two

years later but things didn't work out there and in 1972 he was welcomed back to the *News* by top editor Michael O'Neill, who admired his "intelligence and aggressiveness." Hardy returned the compliment; in a 1977 memo, he said he admired O'Neill's commitment to hiring minorities and called him "one of the most decent people I know."

When he returned to the *News*, Hardy was given the New Jersey beat and was encouraged to concentrate on investigative reporting, which was what he was interested in. Alex Michelini, Hardy's supervisor from 1974 to 1978, thinks "he got every break in the book." Hardy didn't see it that way. Many years went by before he got a merit raise and, he testified, he felt increasingly ignored by O'Neill as he watched younger white men like Sam Roberts (now an urban affairs columnist at *The New York Times*) "being groomed and having their careers channeled" for big-time jobs like city hall bureau chief.

"It is a joke to compare them," Tom Morrison said of Hardy and Roberts during the trial. But Hardy thought he was easily as good as Roberts and "better than ninety-nine percent of the reporters in this country." During his stint at *The Washington Post*, he had sat between Woodward and Bernstein and, he stated in a deposition, he thought he was "much better than both. Better writer, better reporter." "He could have been a great reporter," says Michelini, "if he had put as much energy into developing his craft as he has into this lawsuit."

At first Hardy tried to change the system from within. He formed the black caucus at the *News* in 1977 with colleagues who shared his frustrations about the fact that there were no black reporters on high-profile beats like Albany or Washington. The caucus drew management's attention to several inequities and, for a while, there was a congenial exchange of ideas. But by 1980 Hardy was comparing O'Neill to Hitler and, in what he termed his "last memo" to his employer, wondering what "it is that makes men like you . . . hate someone like me just because I am black?"

It was a New Jersey story gone national that became David Hardy's personal hell and the heart of his lawsuit.



William Godeff

The winners: The four black plaintiffs are, from left to right, Cousewell Vaughan, David Hardy, Steven Duncan, and Joan Shepard. Their chief attorneys were Daniel Alterman (extreme left) and Susan Singer (in front of Hardy).

Hardy believes he was one of the first reporters in the country with the Abscam story. He claimed in a deposition that he would be a rich and famous writer today if the *News* had allowed him to run with it instead of pulling him off the story and substituting "a favored white reporter" to lead the coverage. He seemed to believe that the *News* had ruined his career because the editors thought a black man wasn't good enough to handle a front-page story.

But the *News* contended that he never had the big story — that all he had when NBC broke Abscam to the nation on February 2, 1980, was an interesting, undeveloped story about New Jersey Senator Harrison Williams's hidden interest in a casino. (Williams was one of the first to be caught by the FBI's sting operation.) According to the reporter with whom he shared a by-line on the story and who testified for the defense, Hardy himself admitted that his contribution was unconnected to the Abscam story. Nevertheless, Hardy told the jury that he was so upset about being cut out of a starring role in the initial Abscam report and relegated to being just a member of the team in subsequent coverage that he thought he might be heading for

a nervous breakdown. He went home sick and didn't come back to work for a month.

Richard Oliver, metropolitan editor of the *Daily News* in 1980, explained to the jury that he had assigned chief political correspondent John McLaughlin to lead the coverage because McLaughlin knew most of the principal figures and because anchoring big political stories with contributions by a number of reporters was his forte.

The defense contended that nobody had removed Hardy from his New Jersey beat, as he claimed. He went out sick at a time when, Oliver testified, he needed every political reporter he had out in the field to catch up on the biggest story in the country.

When Hardy returned to his job, things only got worse. He filed a story about New Jersey's Democratic state leader, Richard Coffee, which stated that FBI Abscam tapes showed that Coffee had "stormed from the room in anger when he realized he was being offered a bribe." The next day *Newsday* ran a piece mentioning the *News*'s report and contradicting Hardy's version of events.

After an investigation showed that *Newsday* had the story right, *Daily News*

editors concluded that Hardy had been using the paper to benefit Coffee, a client of attorney Raymond Brown, who was a close friend of Hardy's. On the stand, Hardy denied that he had gotten his information from Brown and said he had been the victim of a bad source, something that could happen to any reporter. The *News* printed a "clarification." A week later, Hardy filed another story about Coffee, again depicting him as an innocent bystander who had been caught in a sting operation. Oliver spotted the story going in at the last minute and killed it. He was furious: Hardy was at it again, trying to sneak a "phony story" into the *News*.

Oliver testified that he wanted to have Hardy fired. Instead, Hardy was pulled out of New Jersey and reassigned to Brooklyn. He has remained in suspended animation at the *News* ever since, occasionally filing stories but apparently devoting most of his energy to preparing his case against the *News*.

When it was his turn, Hardy's attorney, Daniel Alterman, pressed the *News*'s witnesses hard. He was a killer. At one point, reporter Alex Michelini, infuriated by not being allowed to tell what he saw as the whole story, told

Alterman, "You'd make a terrible reporter." But as a lawyer Alterman was brilliant, limiting witnesses' responses to just what he needed, editing and shaping a portrait of Dave Hardy as a man wronged. The context in which he presented Hardy was, in rough outline, as follows:

- Over the years the *News* had published a lot of stories written by white reporters that had contained errors far more serious than any made by Hardy in his Coffee story.

- If the erroneous Coffee story was really so embarrassing for the *News*, how come metro editor Dick Oliver failed to talk to Hardy or to his supervisors in New Jersey about it, thus allowing them to assign him to write a second story about Coffee?

- If it had been a white reporter who had screwed up, the reporter would have been given a slap on the wrist instead of being exiled to Brooklyn after ten years' service with the paper.

- Oliver was intent on destroying Hardy's reputation because he knew Hardy was planning to file discrimination charges against the *News* as the result of his treatment in the Abscam matter. (To support this charge, Alterman produced an internal memo showing that the *News* wanted Hardy "out of Trenton" even before the publication of the Coffee story.)

- Finally, Alterman beat up on Oliver for being ready to believe the worst about Dave Hardy and not even having "the decency to call him up and ask him about" the episode.

Alterman also convinced the judge to exclude six *Daily News* witnesses and some evidence about Hardy that might well have proved very damaging. Most notable was a series of articles, starting in 1973, that Hardy had written about a pair of landlords without alerting his editors to the fact that the two men were his landlords and that he was involved in a dispute with them. To make matters worse, Hardy described the landlords as mob-linked and, when the landlords sued, would not reveal his sources. The *News* had to ante up an estimated \$200,000 libel settlement.

Alterman's skillfully selective portrait of his client proved persuasive. The jury found that the *Daily News* had discriminated against Hardy when he was re-

moved from the Abscam story and had retaliated against him when he complained about it.



JOAN SHEPARD

Joan Shepard is a survivor. She joined the *Daily News* in 1973 after doing fashion and consumer reporting at *Women's Wear Daily* and WINS Radio. "I wasn't dreaming of some kind of Cinderella story," she told me. "I didn't come here to be publisher, but I expected a normal career track." It took her a while and she had to file a lawsuit to achieve it, but a couple of years ago Gil Spencer gave her the title of Manhattan cultural affairs editor and considers her "well-placed now."

The plaintiffs' lawyers made no attempt to portray Shepard as a potential superstar, as they did in the case of Dave Hardy. Shepard was a good journalist, willing to work hard to achieve her goals at the *News*, and she knew what she wanted. What stood in her way? Like Hardy, Shepard claimed that jobs she wanted — in her case, in the women's and features departments — were routinely given to white reporters and that she was not afforded equal consideration.

She told of being assigned to hard news and captions instead of areas she had some feeling for. She was called insulting names, she said, and never received any encouragement to develop her skills from the top-line editors. "We are talking about a closed club," she said on the stand.

Her former editors testified that she hadn't been promoted sooner because she was "not a great writer" and "there were dozens of more qualified people" in the newsroom. "They went all out to prove themselves, offering ideas, working up stories in their free time and selling them free-lance to the sections they wanted in at. That's how they got ahead," Mike O'Neill told me.

Shepard won more of her claims than any other plaintiff.

STEVEN DUNCAN

Steven Duncan is well liked at the *Daily News*. A dignified, white-haired gentleman who comes across as one of those easygoing people who has a pleasant word for everyone, Duncan was named assistant news editor after working at the paper for fourteen years — and after joining the discrimination suit. "I got the feeling that that was the first time they'd looked at my résumé since they hired me, and found I was qualified," he told me.

He said he was first struck by the paper's racism in 1973, when two white colleagues were promoted ahead of him, although it seemed to him that they were no better qualified than he was. He had a solid background in journalism when he came to the *News* in 1969, having worked at the *Baltimore Afro-American* in the fifties and, later, at the *New York World-Telegram and Sun*.

News editors told the jury that Duncan had not really deserved to be promoted from his "not insignificant" job as a New Jersey section editor. They described his work as "undistinguished" and said he wasn't aggressive enough.

After Duncan filed a grievance with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in June of 1980, he was transferred from his job as a section ed-



itor to the makeup room. He considered it a demotion and a punishment for having filed the grievance. The *News* said he was moved because the New Jersey operation was being scaled down and many jobs were eliminated.

The jury listened attentively as this sixty-three-year-old man expressed humiliation at having been assigned to a menial task and said he was confused about how aggressive he was expected to be to succeed. "I don't call people names," he offered politely at one point.

The jury decided that Duncan had not received equal consideration for a couple of editorships he might have been in line for.



CAUSEWELL VAUGHAN

A handsome, personable man who was born in Jamaica, Causewell Vaughan has seen better days at the *Daily News*. When he arrived there from a job at The Associated Press in 1974, he announced his desire to be the first black executive at the *News*, and Mike O'Neill, Dick Oliver, night city editor Dick Blood, and other powerful men at the paper were in his corner.

As a matter of principle, he turned down a pretty good assistant-editor job that was offered him because he thought he deserved the top spot, which went to a white man with no more apparent ability. He went on to become one of the highest-ranking black editorial workers in the shop — editor of the Brooklyn section. For the last five years, however, Vaughan has been working as a copy editor. Many onlookers consider him to be the one tragic figure among the four plaintiffs, but they don't believe race killed his career at the *News*. They think he did himself in.

The *News*'s lawyers portrayed Oliver as one of Vaughan's champions. But Vaughan said that the editor expressed his support in a deeply racist way on occasion, like the time they went out for a drink and Oliver confided that it was time the *News* had a "nigger columnist" and that he was recommending Vaughan for the job. The words rankled, Vaughan said, but he kept his feelings to himself because he wanted to get ahead. (The epithet also rankled Oliver, who testified that he had never said such a thing.)

Vaughan did not get that column, but he did rise in the hierarchy — to a regional editorship in the Manhattan-Bronx section of the paper, where he was a big hit; then on to Brooklyn, where, *News* editors testified, he was a bit of a flop. By this time, Vaughan had become increasingly disappointed at being overlooked for several jobs for which he believed he was qualified. He had done well, but he was convinced he would have advanced farther and faster if he

had been a white man. Disenchanted, he started to withdraw from the life of the paper. By 1979, a colleague told me, he was acting just like "an empty suit."

The lawyers for the *News* said it was job performance, coupled with "probably the most fundamental breach of a journalistic ethic that can be imagined," that led to Vaughan's being passed over for promotion. They cited his bad judgment in having Brooklyn congressman Fred Richmond co-sign a \$2,460 loan for him while he was overseeing coverage of the politician for the *Daily News*. "It was an incredibly stupid mistake," Vaughan now says, "but other people at the *News* have made mistakes and still gotten ahead."

Frank Lombardi, chief political editor of the *News*, who is white, says, "I can tell you I would have been fired if I had done that." All of Vaughan's editors who took the stand agreed that he should have been fired for his breach of journalistic ethics. Instead, after an internal investigation showed that his financial arrangement had not compromised the paper's coverage, he was demoted to a copy-editor position — "work," Daniel Alterman said indignantly, "he could do in his sleep."

Why wasn't Causewell Vaughan fired?

Alterman claimed it was because the *News* "realized they had been promoting people for years with worse violations." He presented example after example of reporters moonlighting for competing papers, writing press releases and doing research for city agencies, holding jobs on state assemblymen's staffs — all while working at the *News*. He recounted, with obvious relish, the story of metro editor Dick Oliver's having a fire department buddy install an illegal police siren on his personal car at city expense.

This made Oliver look bad, but it and the other examples cited by Alterman hardly compared with having a politician your paper is covering lend you money. Causewell Vaughan must have known that what he was doing would be viewed as totally unacceptable. Nevertheless, Les Payne, assistant managing editor of Long Island's *Newsday*, who appeared as an expert witness for the reporters, believes that the jury was right on target

in its decision that Vaughan was discriminated against by being demoted for the Richmond matter. "None of us in the business can condone what Causewell did," he says, "but the *News* forfeited its right to throw him out because of their own sloppiness [i.e., because they let so many other people off the hook]. That's why the jury decided for Causewell, not because they are stupid and don't understand journalism."

Was there racism at the *News*?

I have never worked on a story in which what people saw depended so completely on their race.

Sam Roberts is white. He had a brilliant career at the *Daily News*. Plucked right off the school paper at Cornell, he rose quickly at the *News*, becoming city editor by the time he was thirty. I asked Roberts, who is now at *The New York Times*, whether he believed that a "arific black reporter would have had the same chance to become a *Daily News* superstar as he himself had back in the 1970s.

"Absolutely," he said. "They certainly had as much of an opportunity to come up as I did." All the white editors and reporters I subsequently spoke to agreed.

Not one black editorial worker I spoke to agreed.

"I don't think that's generally true," says Sheryl McCarthy, who did very well at the *News*, becoming education editor in 1980 and going on to ABC *News*. "Everybody who's ever worked at the *Daily News* knows how damned racist it is," says Clinton Cox, a former *News* writer, who was once part of the discrimination suit but settled and has left journalism. "Sam Roberts has to be naive or insensitive beyond belief," says Les Payne. Ron Claiborne, a former *Daily News* reporter now at ABC *News*, believes that "all the opportunities that came up were as a result of the suit." And Robert Fleming, who was hired on at the *News* four years ago, says, "I don't feel a black writer has as good a chance as a white reporter."

What Dave Hardy, Joan Shepard, Steve Duncan, and Causewell Vaughan saw when they arrived at the New York *Daily News* was a city room in transition. Mike O'Neill's goal was to create an "intelligent tabloid." He wanted to keep the paper earthy and close to the ground

for the workingman but also to rid the paper of its fires-rapes-and-murder image in order to attract some of the liberal readers the *New York Post* had held on to. He set about hiring black writers and, for the first time, he hired reporters fresh out of college who could both gather the facts and write them up. This left the traditionally revered rewrite men sitting by the phones waiting for calls that never came. There was racial tension and there was generational tension.

There was always a lot of macho man-talk, and, according to testimony, insults of every variety, including racial ones, filled the air. People would bellow things across the room like "We don't have a story until the cops shoot a couple of those spics," Hardy said in court. The plaintiffs came down hard on the men who ran the city room, Dick Oliver and Dick Blood, branding them arch-racists who had no respect for black writers. (Oliver, now a political correspondent for WCBS-TV in New York, also does a nightly radio show called *Daily News Tomorrow*. Blood is an assistant professor at Columbia's Graduate School of Journalism.)

City hall bureau chief Marcia Kramer and many others believe that both men "got a bum rap." They were, Kramer adds, "difficult and demanding but I learned a lot from them." "Dick Oliver was the best city editor this paper has ever seen," says chief political editor Frank Lombardi. "He was a tough guy of the old *Front Page* school, but I don't think he was a racist." George James, a borough/suburban editor at the *Daily News* until 1985, when he went over to *The New York Times*, says of his former boss, "You've got to give the devil his due. Dick Blood discriminated against no one. Everyone came in for equal abuse. He used to call me 'the dumb Bulgarian.' I never took it as a true measure of his feelings."

Alex Micheline, who has been at the paper for nineteen years, says, "You could take a bowling ball, roll it down the center of the city room, and hit twenty white guys who feel they aren't being given an even break and recognized for the geniuses they are." Sheryl McCarthy, who is black, doesn't see it that way: "It was not like the place was

filled with spectacularly talented white writers, but somehow they got on track."

The plaintiffs described trying to socialize with their editors. They went out for drinks, accepted invitations to play tennis, attended weddings. But they always felt a distance, a separation. They had not attended the same schools, they did not live in the same neighborhoods, they did not belong to the same clubs. They lived in two different worlds. "It's a subtle thing," says Cornelius Foote, a black business writer with *The Washington Post*. "They have a link because of race. The white whiz kids with the Ivy League stamp fit in with the network as soon as they arrive, and a black man is at a disadvantage."

The absence of that kind of informal support system is the critical difference, according to Les Payne. "Editors teach reporters and pass on the craft. Where the system breaks down is that the craft doesn't tend to get passed to black reporters. I watched the craft being passed right by me at *Newsday*. I stole the craft by listening to Maurice Swift, who did a mean telephone interview. I clipped John Pascal's work and studied the interior of his sentences."

Daniel Alterman entreated the jury to "listen to the names" of the in-crowd and then to decide for themselves whether the separation his clients described was a reality. "Artie! Bobby!" he exploded. "Do you think they ever offered [Hardy] the opportunity to be Davey Hardy and get the good story assignments? Or Causey Vaughan? No. They always remained black reporters and black editors."

Is 'average' good enough?

Would the plaintiffs have been hired if they had been averagely talented white reporters? It would seem fair to say that they were hired more because the *Daily News* was going all out to get black staffers on board than because of any particular promise they showed. Once hired, they were judged and expected to succeed on the merit system, just like anyone else. Sam Roberts says they were given an equal chance to succeed, and more. "If race was a factor, it was only in their favor," he insists.

In court, the adjectives their peers used most commonly to describe the plaintiffs' work were "weak," "uni-

maginative," and "average." "Average" became almost an epithet.

Although, ultimately, the case was not about how good the plaintiffs' copy was but about whether promotion decisions were racially biased, the two points seemed inextricably connected because of the defense's contention that, as journalists, the plaintiffs were just average and average was just not good enough to get ahead at the *News*.

"This case was a loser from the start and I'll tell you why," says Jimmy Breslin, a Pulitzer Prize winner and the *News*'s biggest star. "They [the lawyers for the *News*] went all out to prove [the plaintiffs] weren't so good. All of us, including Breslin, aren't so good. The people who got promoted weren't so hot. Black people have every right to be as poor at their jobs as white people and get promoted."

A view from the top

"Journalism is still a world where blacks are surrounded by white men, and I have nothing but sympathy for the pressures they are under," says Mike O'Neill, former editor of the *Daily News*.

O'Neill is the man who hired Joan Shepard, Causewell Vaughan, and Steve Duncan, and who welcomed Dave Hardy back to the paper, but he has just seen his entire era at the *News* judged and found guilty of racial discrimination. Many of his colleagues find it ironic that this bitter trial was, in a sense, a byproduct of his sincere effort to bring black journalists into the newsroom. Jimmy Breslin speaks for many when he says, "He's one of the great men of this business. He came in here when it was bigoted and cleaned it up. So he didn't move a mountain." Many of the black employees O'Neill brought to the *News* also concede that he tried.

Does O'Neill have any thoughts about where things went wrong?

"I took a lot of pride in the forty-three black reporters we had gotten on staff by 1979, before we were hit with layoffs, without being satisfied with our progress," he says. "Our whole concentration was on getting the numbers up. Once they were in the system, there was a whole new level of problems to face: career satisfaction, promotion, development of talent, everything that was highlighted in such a grotesque fashion

at the trial. We hired many beginners and didn't move them as effectively as we could have. We weren't thinking clearly about how hard it would be to bring a black into this environment and ask him to succeed.

"In the case of Dave [Hardy], he started to see all of the normal stresses in the news business in strongly emotional and racial terms. He did not have the Abscam story and a clique is not what kept him from getting ahead. I guess it is in vogue to carelessly slap labels on people, and I think that's as bad as prejudice. If Dave calls everyone a racist, what power does the accusation have?"

Behind the desk of the paper's present editor, Gil Spencer, stands a neat stack of transcripts from the two-and-a-half-month trial. The *News* has hired nine minority journalists in the past two years since Spencer joined the paper — three just since the start of the trial. Reporters are proud of the way the *News* has covered important stories about New York's minority communities in recent months (like the fire that killed seven people in Harlem's Schomburg Plaza housing complex). "It's hard to think of this place now as a racist sheet, even in light of the verdict," Spencer says.

The verdict came at a bad time for the *Daily News*. The future of the paper is up in the air again, just as it has been throughout most of the eighties. The Chicago Tribune Company is demanding heavy union givebacks again, the *New York Post* is threatening to start a competitive Sunday edition, and *Newsday* continues to nibble away at the paper's circulation. Worst of all, *Newsday* has stolen Jimmy Breslin. The *News*'s biggest star will go over to the competition in 1988.

I tell Spencer that many of the paper's black editors and writers say they don't think the problems have been solved. They still have plenty of stories to offer about the lack of blacks in high-visibility jobs, salary differentials, skewed coverage, a crony system based on race.

"This is going to sound a little excusey," he says, "but when I came in here I had to move quickly to get the place in shape. The management told me we were in a turn-around situation; we

might have to close. I changed a lot of department heads in one fell swoop and if qualified blacks had swung into my view I would have grabbed them. But with the lawsuit hanging over our heads and the rumors of our demise so public, I don't guess this was a place a hot token would be attracted to. Now I have a bunch of white guys in the thirty-five-to forty-year-old range in the top spots and I can't see throwing one out. I don't have saber-tooth racists running these desks. We are reasonable people."

Should it be somebody's special priority to see that blacks get promoted and survive in the system? "Yes," he says immediately. "We have people here who are black who are doing well. We are going to have to 'roll our own.' I am hiring young, very bright people. We don't have a minority training program but we train here every day and in a couple of years they will be better placed and better able to deal with high-level jobs. We will keep trying."

"We are on the hot box now," he adds, "but we are not alone. No paper in this country is clean on race."

Aftermath

The way the jury viewed and judged the inner workings of the *Daily News* — how a story is assigned and researched, written and edited, how talent is recognized and promoted or ignored — was watched with intense interest by black and white journalists at publications across the nation.

Cornelius Foote of *The Washington Post* says the trial "confirms a lot of what goes on for black reporters all around the country. The ignorance, the insensitivity. The case brought it all out. It's not nothing. Something is very wrong and the cages have to be rattled more than before."

Loren Ghiglione, editor and publisher of the Southbridge, Massachusetts, *News*, heads up a task force that for the past three years has been trying to increase minority employment in the industry. He worries that the verdict may scare publishers away from dealing with minority professionals at all. "They may think that if I'm not this guy's best friend every day, he'll sue me. A lawsuit has a way of concentrating people's attention. I just hope it concentrates it in a positive manner."

Dave Hardy — who told David D'Arcy of National Public Radio, "I'm glad to see there is still justice and it can come from white people" — plans to stay at the *News*. "This is just the first in a series of many battles with the press barons who claim public fairness and the public right to know," he told D'Arcy, "but when it comes to the way they treat people it's a different ball game."

After originally vowing to appeal what one *News* lawyer termed "this miscarriage of justice," the paper decided instead to cut its losses and try to move on. Days before the jury that had found the paper guilty of discrimination was to fix damage awards, the *News* settled with the plaintiffs for a reported \$3.1 million. As part of the deal, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission dropped an upcoming class-action suit against the paper, which has agreed to carry out an aggressive affirmative-action program.

"Nothing is real clear-cut here," says Jimmy Breslin. "But I think it says a lot that the *Daily News* had the only blacks with spines enough to deal with this head-on. At least it shows [management] wanted minority writers who were alive. That's more than you can say for any other paper in this town. The *News* didn't believe they discriminated and they weren't ashamed to let the public decide. This was just typical of the whole joint. This is supposed to be a messy, impolite newspaper and it lived up to its reputation. There was discord and screaming. It was a neighborhood fight to the finish and at least both sides had the guts to do it. That's the *Daily News*."

Editors' note

In the interest of full disclosure it should be stated that, in 1980, Michael Hoyt — then a reporter at The Record in Bergen County, New Jersey, and since last November an associate editor of the Review — was the target of an attack by David Hardy, one of the plaintiffs in the Daily News trial. After Hoyt had written an article for New Jersey Monthly questioning the accuracy of Hardy's Abscam reporting, Hardy wrote a letter to the magazine accusing Hoyt of racism. The letter was cited by the defense at the Daily News trial as evidence of Hardy's readiness to call anyone who criticized his work a racist. Hoyt had nothing to do with the editing of Jan Albert's piece.

The communist press

USSR: a door opens

by JEFF SOMMER

MOSCOW — The press critic was no dissident; he was Viktor Afanasyev, editor-in-chief of *Pravda*, the party organ. He was not speaking privately to a Western journalist but addressing the sixth congress of the U.S.S.R. Journalists Union. In a startling March 14 keynote address, Afanasyev charged that the information services of the nation's ministries and departments "have virtually turned into obstacles to obtaining information." He attacked regional Communist party officials for trying to discredit journalists who were trying to do serious reporting in their bailiwicks. And he lambasted the "mediocrities" in Soviet journalism "who are simply filling in time for their wages."

That the editor of *Pravda* delivered such a critique; that TASS, the official Soviet news agency, issued a lengthy version of his speech; and that *Pravda* published it are, taken together, a clear sign of the direction in which Soviet journalism is moving. In the era of *glasnost* — or openness — ushered in by Mikhail Gorbachev, some bureaucrats may, as Afanasyev suggested, still be trying to thwart the efforts of inquiring journalists. But for the first time in decades, the Communist party leadership has put its bureaucrats on notice: let the journalists report and publish at least a fair portion of the news.

Formerly as tedious as they were tendentious, the Soviet news media now regularly feature unusually candid reports on major domestic issues. TASS, the official news agency, has begun to provide timely, if sketchy, accounts of accidents and natural disasters. Last fall, for example, TASS filed a prompt but brief report of an accident aboard a Soviet nuclear submarine off the U.S. coast, in which three people died. Again, last December, the news agency announced that there had been a "loss of human lives" at a Ukrainian coal mine as a result of a methane explosion. (The report did not say how many people

had died, or provide any quotes from people at the scene, or indicate the cause of the accident.) Stories about explosions, earthquakes, floods, even riots, now are common. All this represents a major improvement over the wire service's performance in April 1986, when it failed to issue even a single word about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster for forty hours — long after the world's worst nuclear accident had been reported by every major Western news organization.

Investigative reporting also is being expanded: Newspapers, magazines, and the broadcast media report on corruption within the bureaucracy, incompetence by state planners, industrial accidents, defects in manufacturing, inter-ethnic tension, drug abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, and juvenile delinquency.

What has occurred, Soviet journalists maintain, is reform, not revolution. "It's not that we never ran any stories of this type before," says Nikolai Bodnarouk, an editor at *Izvestia*. "But we are encouraged to do more of this kind of work now. It is a challenge that journalists are eager to accept."

The leadership's willingness to back up journalists was highlighted this past January when *Pravda* carried a front-page letter signed by Viktor Chebrikov, a full member of the ruling politburo and chairman of the KGB. Chebrikov disclosed that the head of a KGB department in the Ukraine had been sacked for illegally arresting a muckraking reporter who had exposed local corruption.

This appears to have been the first time since the 1953 execution of Lavrenty Beria, in the aftermath of Josef Stalin's death, that *Pravda* had reported the removal of a top state-security official. What's more, Chebrikov's letter and a series of *Pravda* articles put the nation's bureaucrats on notice that lashing out at journalists who expose them will be a very hazardous form of self-defense.

The following month, in a speech to "leaders of the mass media and propa-

ganda" in Moscow, Gorbachev made it clear that he would not be satisfied with the lackluster, propaganda-laden accounts typical of so much of Soviet journalism. It is time, he said, for Soviet society to analyze its problems in an open and straightforward manner.

Speeches by Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders, together with a cautious lifting of the censor's heavy hand, have made it possible for journalists to at least tentatively explore vast shadowy areas of Soviet life and history — from the Stalinist gulag to prostitution in the heart of Moscow.

This is not to say that all barriers have suddenly been removed. Gorbachev has made it quite clear that the *glasnost* policy does not envisage journalism on the Western model, in which reporting, at least in theory, is unaffected by ideological considerations. In the U.S.S.R. since the days of Lenin, journalism has always been subordinated to the doctrinal requirements of the Communist party.

Even here, however, there are hints of change. Speaking at the March congress of the Union of Journalists, Aleksandr Bovin, a well-known political observer for *Izvestia*, "spoke in favor of clear-cut differentiation between official materials which express the point of view of the government and journalists'



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personal commentaries," according to a TASS account of his remarks. Bovin said it was necessary "to accustom both Soviet readers and the whole world to the fact that 'if a well-known observer is writing an article, it does not mean at all that he expresses the position of the Kremlin.'"

Bovin did not say — or at least the TASS version of his speech did not say — that a major reason for readers' inability to distinguish between the party-line view and the views expressed by journalists is that there rarely is a discernible difference, especially on foreign-policy issues. The only way readers will be "accustomed" to perceiving a distinction is if journalists are permitted to express independent views — which may have been the point of Bovin's remarks. Even under *glasnost* the Soviet press still requires some close reading between the lines.

In Afanasyev's speech at the same congress, one sees an apparent attempt to balance the party's guiding role with the journalist's need for independence. "No sooner is a correspondent assigned somewhere to criticize or collect critical material than the phone calls start," he said. "Attempts are made to hamper the article and, if that fails, [the subjects of the investigation] seek an acceptable smooth answer, phone the editorial bureau, and try to find out 'who authorized it.'"

Going public: To gain support for his modernization program, Mikhail Gorbachev has been going over the heads of party bureaucrats and appealing directly to the Soviet people.



V. Sobolev/Sovfoto



Moscow News

Tough talk: Foreign leaders can now be heard on Soviet TV taking swipes at Soviet policies. In an interview last March, Margaret Thatcher made it clear that she — and many other Europeans — feels threatened by Soviet military power.

Yet Afanasyev also stressed journalists' responsibility to disseminate "the propaganda of socialism." (In the Soviet Union, the word "propaganda" does not have the negative connotation that it carries in the West; journalism and propaganda are not regarded as incompatible.) Leeway for ideologically independent work is especially limited in the area of foreign policy. With respect to international issues, Afanasyev said, journalists should promote "the advantages of socialism as a society of working people, a society of social justice and real democracy which rejects militarism and the policy of force, a society offering mankind a nuclear-free future. . . . The press, radio, and television are called upon to produce sound arguments to expose the reactionary essence of contemporary capitalism."

This attitude, expressed here with admirable frankness, helps explain why Soviet journalists invariably rejoin the chorus line on international issues, even if they are permitted to dance a few steps of their own devising when writing about domestic matters. Vladimir Gerasichev, a Radio Moscow correspondent based in New York, concedes that on foreign affairs there is much more unanimity among Soviet journalists than among their American counterparts. "I think this is because we honestly agree with our government," he says. "This may be a function of Soviet society, of the way we were trained. We aren't told what to say. We say what we believe." Whatever the reason, the Soviet media do not carry much dissident opinion about the war in Afghanistan, or Soviet

support for Vietnam's invasion of Kampuchea, or the Kremlin's decision to resume nuclear tests.

Under Gorbachev, though, some highly critical views from abroad are beginning to get into print and onto the airwaves. This past January, Soviet censors stopped jamming shortwave transmissions of the BBC World Service in Russian and English. In an even more startling move, in late May the Soviet Union stopped jamming Voice of America radio broadcasts into the country for the first time since 1980. (At the same time, however, the jamming of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty was intensified.)

Moscow News, a weekly publication of the Novosti Press Agency, which prints 300,000 copies in Russian and 700,000 in foreign languages, has become famous for the boldness of its editor, Yegor Yakovlev. Russian-language copies are bought up in Moscow as soon as they appear. In late March, *Moscow News* reprinted a long letter by prominent Soviet émigrés that ran in *Le Figaro* and other Western publications. Signed by ten literary and scientific figures, including Vladimir Bukovsky, the scientist, Yuri Orlov, the physicist and human rights activist, and Yuri Lyubimov, former director of the Taganka Theater, the letter attacked a wide range of Soviet policies, including restrictions on emigration, the war in Afghanistan, the lack of democracy within the U.S.S.R., and even the rule of the party. Yakovlev wrote a sharp rebuttal in the same issue and published another answer to the dissidents in the following issue. Despite



The bad news beat: This photo of a flood in Soviet Georgia, which ran in the monthly Soviet Union last March, would almost certainly not have been published in pre-glasnost days, when floods, earthquakes, explosions, and other disasters were not considered news by the Soviet press.

these defensive moves, however, he reportedly came under party criticism for airing the emigrés' views in the first place.

Of perhaps greater importance, because of its nationwide audience, Soviet television has started to air interviews with Western officials who are directly at odds with the Soviet line. Last September, Jack Matlock, now the U.S. ambassador in Moscow, then President Reagan's senior adviser on the Soviet Union, told a Soviet television audience of the U.S. administration's condemnation of Soviet human rights policies. This past March, in the course of an interview that resembled a debate, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher told three Soviet journalists of her resolve to maintain the British nuclear arsenal and explained why she could not go along with Gorbachev's call for the denuclearization of Europe.

"A small country, if it stands alone, can stand up to a big country if it has nuclear weapons," Thatcher told her startled interviewers. "You ask why I put the question like this. Historically, Great Britain had occasion to stand alone. Hitler occupied all of Europe, and we were alone. The United States had not yet entered the war and Hitler had not yet attacked the Soviet Union. We have this experience. We were alone." These brief comments challenged the prevailing propaganda line on at least three key points: they implicitly questioned the sincerity of Gorbachev's peace overture; they left little doubt of

Thatcher's belief that the Soviet Union constitutes a military threat and is not universally regarded as peace-loving; and they reminded the television audience that the Soviet Union had allied itself with Hitler in the early years of World War II, a fact overlooked in the frequent reenactments of the war on Soviet television.

This experience did not deter Soviet central television from conducting a half-hour interview with Secretary of State George Shultz when he visited Moscow for arms control talks the following month. Like Mrs. Thatcher, Shultz was not in a mood to yield ideological ground. He dismissed an interviewer's contention that the U.S. had concocted a spy scandal to disrupt relations with the U.S.S.R. Shultz said that he had toured the new U.S. chancery in Moscow himself and had seen Soviet-implemented bugs. "I can see with my own eyes what you did . . .," said the secretary of state, whose remarks were translated in full for millions of Soviet television viewers. "I told your leadership that we have a lot of respect for the work of your technical service . . . you do a good job." Shultz apparently went beyond the bounds of *glasnost* when he attacked Soviet policies in Afghanistan. The simultaneous Russian translation stopped, and Shultz's voice could be heard saying in English that the people of Afghanistan "don't want you there."

The social implications of public access to these foreign views — to say

nothing of the relatively diverse blend of information and opinion now available on domestic subjects — is difficult to assess. Gorbachev has used *glasnost* for his own limited purposes — to dislodge opposition and drum up mass support for his effort to reform the economy. Like a Western politician, he has employed the mass media to reach over the heads of the bureaucracy and appeal directly to the people, warning on television and in the national press in April that opposition extends into the ranks of the Communist party's central committee. "There are people accustomed to the old way of life, who do not want to revise it or are changing it very slowly," Gorbachev said on one occasion. Journalistic exposés of these recalcitrants can be expected to aid the new party leader.

Gorbachev also has spoken favorably of the broader goal of "democratizing" society, of freeing the intelligentsia from overregulation, encouraging debate, stimulating creativity, and moving the U.S.S.R. fully into the modern age. Commendable though these goals may seem in the West, it should be clear that what is intended in the U.S.S.R. is not "bourgeois democracy" but a revived socialist system led by a vanguard Communist party. Journalists are expected to contribute to "socialist development" both by reporting, writing, and editing news, and by spreading propaganda. Even under the wildest permutation of the *glasnost* policy this will be the case.

But while it would be naive to expect the blossoming of a free press in the Western sense, skepticism does not require outright dismissal of efforts to reform the mass media. Undeniably, there is a great deal more interesting material to read and watch and listen to, and there are surprises every day. Vending machines at metro entrances are mobbed when late editions of *Evening Moscow* arrive. *Izvestia* alone reports a jump in circulation from seven million to eight million, part of an overall fourteen-million circulation increase claimed by Soviet newspapers last year. People now rush home to catch the 9 P.M. edition of *Vremya*, the evening program that, although stilted by Western standards, nonetheless carries increasing proportions of real news. Soviet citizens are excited by *glasnost*. Surely that is no small thing. ■

The communist press

China: a door closes

by MARK HOPKINS

BEIJING — As the seconds marched to 7 P.M. at China's central television news studio on January 16, television screens across the country displayed familiar stock footage of a goose-stepping, three-man military guard ready to change the red Chinese flag on the vast Tiananmen Square, adjacent to the Forbidden City and Mao Zedong's huge portrait. At exactly 7 P.M., an announcer in a Mao jacket appeared on the screen to begin reading a communique revealing the resignation of Communist party General Secretary Hu Yaobang. News printers throughout China simultaneously typed out the stunning information.

January 16, 1987, is as good a date as any to mark the beginning of Chinese journalism's retreat from its brief foray into the dangerous territory of political criticism, and the resurgence of Communist party control over a press that took Mao Zedong's dictum "seek truth from facts" a bit too seriously, even when it came from the lips of the more pragmatic Deng Xiaoping.

As if by command, China's newspapers; the official news agency, Xinhua; and television and radio broadcasting reverted to dreary propaganda against "bourgeois liberalization" and "total Westernization," code words for internal opposition to party rule — an opposition that some of China's publications and writers had themselves helped to generate.

In the aftermath of December student demonstrations for democracy and the related ouster of General Secretary Hu Yaobang in January, as conservatives gained dominance over the mass media, the party journal *Red Flag* issued the marching orders:

Newspapers, state radio and television, and other publications are mouthpieces of the party and the people. . . . Party committees at all levels should strengthen and improve

leadership over newspapers and magazines and broadcasting and television to help them raise their Marxist and professional standards. . . . It is necessary to close down newspapers and magazines with the wrong political orientation and of poor quality and, in line with the law, to ban all illegal publications.

The orders contrasted sharply with the advice given just one year ago by Teng Teng, deputy director of the propaganda department of the party's central committee. Addressing provincial editors when reform was in the air, he called for editorial autonomy: "Some chief editors have proposed that the editorial board or the chief editor should decide what, and what not, to publish," he said. "I agree with this view. If in editing and running a newspaper, the chief editor has no power to accept or reject news, or to decide what or what not to publish, how can he run the paper? I think that in principle this should always be decided by the newspaper itself."

Earnest discussion a year ago of press reform had harmonized with a renewal of the "double-hundred" policy ("Let one hundred flowers bloom, let one hundred schools of thought contend") and provocative criticism of China's political system. But the changes that took place in the Chinese press under Deng Xiaoping reflect a misreading by liberal Chinese journalists of what he and certain conservatives had in mind when talking about economic and political reforms. There is nothing in Deng Xiaoping's collected speeches going back to 1977 to suggest that he has ever entertained the slightest sympathy for an uncensored press. Rather, as the Chinese mass media burgeoned in the 1980s, at the Deng Xiaoping leadership's insistence, the intent was to harness them to nation-building. That translated into more varied and greater numbers of newspapers and magazines, and the creation of a national television network whose purpose was

to inform and educate a largely ignorant population of one billion.

In 1985, the Journalism Institute of the Academy of Social Sciences counted 1,777 newspapers in China. Fully 1,000 had been established since 1980. Within one more year, there were 2,101 newspapers employing 42,000 editors and writers. Only about one-fifth were Communist party papers. The remainder — the majority of them new — were small, nonpolitical publications catering to the special interests of scientists, farmers, factory managers, students, the elderly, and children. Taking advantage of liberal reforms designed to create a socialist market economy, China's publishing houses also turned out dozens of profitable tabloids appealing to popular desires for sex stories, lurid crime accounts, and violence. These drew millions of curious readers, long accustomed to dry official news, with such tantalizing headlines as *A FEMALE CORPSE IN A BATHTUB* and *THE MYSTERY OF THE NAKED MAIDEN*. One recent report on a sexual offender began, "On a certain day in 1980, a man entered a hospital and asked to be castrated."

The expanding television network eschewed such reports, but it reached vast numbers of Chinese with scenes and dramas never before seen in Communist China. By the end of 1986, central television in Beijing could transmit to 600 satellite-receiving or microwave-relay stations in virtually every part of the country. The number of television sets, counted in the tens of thousands in the late 1970s, jumped to 70 million and the potential audience was estimated at up to 300 million.

Chinese television viewers glimpsed international news and sports events drawn from foreign television services along with serialized dramas that explored human emotions in realistic settings, devoid of heavy political moralizing. A questionnaire put to 1,500 viewers in Beijing by the Beijing Broadcasting Institute and the Journalism In-

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"Let one hundred flowers bloom . . .": China's liberal reforms encouraged dozens of new, profitable tabloids devoted to violence, crime, and sex. But the "spiritually polluted" street press became the conservatives' first — and easiest — target.

Reuters/Bettmann

stitute suggested viewers' habits and tastes. About 27 percent watched television every day, 50 percent "often," and the rest "sometimes" or not at all. News shows and general entertainment were about equally popular. But within the news category, items that still begin almost every central television nightly news program — party and government meetings and speeches — were watched by a meager 6 percent of the Beijing audience.

Through 1985 and into 1986, segments of the Chinese media took on a new popularity as journalists, some of them educated abroad, sought to break the old mold. They were encouraged by reformist politicians and intellectuals who formed an unofficial coalition both to protect the press and to use it to reveal fundamental flaws in Chinese society. They struggled against substantial obstacles, not least those more orthodox officials who soon saw that the "open door" policy opened China to "unhealthy tendencies" — not just dirty books from Hong Kong and Taiwan, but also Western political, economic, and cultural concepts.

The street press was the conserva-

tives' first and easiest target. As early as 1985, *Workers' Daily* denounced the "many profit-seeking tabloids that attract readers mainly by publishing filthy stories describing violence, swindles, and obscenities, as well as unofficial histories and inside stories." The newspaper concluded: "There should be no spiritual pollution on the ideological front." Authorities began to put pressure on the tabloids, closing some down, confiscating tens of thousands of copies of others.

Reformers were unwilling to defend the street tabloids as the price China might have to pay for an uncensored press. But they did come to the defense of journalists who had begun exposing local corruption and crime. Major newspapers, confident that the reformers held a commanding political position, were further buoyed by the revived "double hundred" campaign proposing free debate and discussion. As the movement blossomed in 1986, influential publications, including *People's Daily* (then with new editors), *Guangming Daily* (for intellectuals), *Economics Daily*, and the Shanghai-based *World Economic Herald*, tested the political waters with

exposés of China's authoritarian system.

The well-known sociologist Fei Xiaotong wrote last summer on the front page of *Guangming Daily*: "[Our present] system is clearly not suitable in the current circumstances. In our institutions, there is a set of people who have aged both in thinking and years, who, in rather sharply critical terms, are accustomed to wielding power, but have no real knowledge or ability." Speaking of political reform, Yan Jiaqi, of the Academy of Social Sciences, told *Guangming Daily*: "First, it is necessary to change the phenomenon of excessive centralization of power."

World Economic Herald, in an article on China's modernization and democracy, argued that "the minimum condition for democracy is to allow people to air their views freely." The piece went on to assert that, in the past, "anyone who said something not pleasing to the ear . . . of a certain leader would be dealt with immediately by means of the proletarian dictatorship."

Carrying the argument further, Yu Haocheng, a member of the Chinese Association for Political Science, argued in the magazine *New Observer* that political democracy — "the ultimate goal of China's political reform" — could not be achieved without laws guaranteeing the freedom of the press.

In the political context of the times, these were daring thoughts. It took no reading between the lines of the Chinese press to understand that the Communist party's monopoly of power and its suppression of civil liberties were under attack, and openly for all to see. The reports and commentaries may not have been read by China's workers and peasants, but they were read by government and party officials, intellectuals, and, not least, by China's two million university students, who were being told, they thought, that fresh winds were sweeping through China's ossified politics.

The student demonstrations that began quietly in November, and then spread quickly through twenty or more Chinese cities in December and early January, alarmed authorities, particularly the party's conservatives. Students carrying banners and shouting slogans on the streets vociferously objected to an authoritarian system that manipulated the

mass media and denied freedom of speech and assembly. Ironically, the demonstrating students were themselves, in effect, being manipulated — not by the official press, which they distrusted, but by liberal Chinese editors who could never distance themselves sufficiently from the political fray to report the growing conservative opposition to general social reforms. Their reluctance to do so was to have devastating consequences.

To express their demands, the students had seized on a traditional medium of popular opinion — “big-character posters” or *dazibao*. As student marches proliferated in December of 1986, so did the *dazibao* on China’s university campuses. Hundreds of excited students gathered around bulletin boards to read posters and to tape-record or copy down their contents for the benefit of fellow students. Summaries of foreign radio broadcasts about the demonstrations appeared on big-character posters, as did the words of Fang Lizhi, a professor of astrophysics whose championing of political democracy made him a student hero.

There was no ambiguity in *dazibao*

declarations. One big-character poster put up at the prestigious Beijing University read: “In the U.S., there is the false freedom to support or not to support the Communist party. In our country, we have the genuine freedom to support the Communist party. In the U.S., there is a false freedom of freedom of the press. But in our country, we have the genuine freedom of no freedom of the press.”

Another poster said: “Dictatorship by one party has monopolized the entire legislative, judicial, executive, foreign policy, and military and propaganda machinery of the country. . . . The wanton distortion of propaganda has unceasingly cheated the people. This is our political system, little better than feudal despotism, or even more ruthless, dictatorial, and terroristic.”

The *dazibao* posed an unacceptable challenge to China’s political leaders. As student demonstrations came to a climax in Beijing, authorities ripped down posters within hours after they were mounted. *Beijing Daily*, the city’s party and government newspaper, warned that posters “harm political stability and unity” and that, “if spread unchecked, they will certainly create social disorder.” Chinese students, not ones to tol-

erate criticism from the government, gleefully assembled on the Beijing University campus in January to torch copies of *Beijing Daily*.

Conservatives, who had watched apprehensively the erosion of the Communist party’s power before the flood of reforms, began their ideological assault by ousting Hu Yaobang, with the blessing of their political ally, Deng Xiaoping. The best-known symbol of an uncensored Chinese press, the “investigative” reporter Liu Binyan of *People’s Daily*, was among the first targets. Purged for twenty years after 1957, the now sixty-one-year-old Liu was rehabilitated only to produce exposés of corruption in the party and government bureaucracies. Deng Xiaoping personally ordered his expulsion from the Communist party, along with Fang Lizhi and Shanghai writer Wang Ruowang. The party decision on Liu accused him of reporting on the “degeneration of the Communist party.” The decision was read in full during a nationally televised party meeting.

As China’s conservatives moved to take control of the press and propaganda machinery, the party’s propaganda chief, Zhu Houze, less than two years



“... let one hundred schools of thought contend”: As demands for reform mounted, excited students gathered around bulletin boards to tape-record or copy down the contents of the “big-character posters” (*dazibao*) for the benefit of fellow students. One read: “This is our political system, little better than feudal despotism, or even more ruthless, dictatorial, and terroristic.”



End of the thaw: *Angered by a warning by Beijing Daily, the official party and government paper, that big-character posters threatened to harm political stability and to create social havoc, students in early January assembled on the campus on Beijing University and gleefully burned copies of the paper. Within days, the brief season of political criticism was over. The Chinese media no longer publish proposals for a free press.*

Wide World

in the job, an ally of Hu Yaobang and an exponent of liberal cultural and literary policies, was summarily fired. The editor of *People's Literature* was disgraced for allowing publication of a short novel in early 1986 that described incest and rape in a Tibetan family. An official criticism claimed the novel undermined unity among China's dominant Han Chinese and minority nationalities.

In January, five days after Hu Yaobang lost his job, it was announced that a new Office of Media and Publications had been established at ministerial level under the State Council. Among its duties is the "drawing up of principles and policies on management of press and publications, and conducting press censorship." The new office is also charged with "banning illegal publications" and "managing the printing of books, newspapers, and periodicals."

The director of the Media and Publications office told the official China News Service that curbs on newspapers and magazines were part of the drive against "bourgeois liberalization" and would focus on those that contradicted official policies or that promoted sex, violence, and superstition.

A number of newspapers were closed down, including *Shenzhen Youth Herald*, which, in reporting on a CBS *60 Minutes* interview with Deng Xiaoping, had suggested it was time for the eighty-two-year-old leader to retire. *Guangming Daily*, however, once a strong proponent of a free press, hewed to the new line. "All cultural activities," a commentary published in April said, "including journalism and publishing, must serve the needs of the four cardinal principles [adherence to the socialist road, the people's democratic dictatorship, Communist party leadership, and Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong thought]."

Proposals for a free press are no longer published in the Chinese media. China's liberal intellectuals, intimidated by the harsh public treatment of Liu Binyan, Fang Lizhi, and Wang Ruowang, are unwilling to discuss the party's monopoly of power, and newspapers are not permitted to give them space. The conservatives who have seized the press complain, as one commentary said, that in the past their views were "mocked." But clearly, no longer.

In retrospect, what went wrong with

tentative reforms of the Chinese press is what has gone wrong with the economic and political reforms. The reformers misjudged the entrenched strength of the conservatives, most especially in the party apparatus.

More broadly, the reform of the Chinese press and the writing of a press law did not go far enough in the twilight years of the Deng Xiaoping leadership to establish, even as an experiment, an independent political and economic base for a state press that could act as a loyal critic.

The reformers argued that a more probing and skeptical press would better serve China's modernization than a "mouthpiece" press that simply parrots the official line. As the country tests decentralized and profit-oriented industrial management, macro-economic controls, new financial institutions, family-based farming, and a mobile labor force, the central leadership cannot possibly learn all the effects of its decisions. Reformers contended that, within the framework of a state-supported press system, a mass media staffed with younger, better-educated editors and reporters could act as monitors and critics of policies gone astray.

That concept has yet to take root in China. The country's reformers, broadly speaking, have been unable to demonstrate that an open and lively press could, in fact, generate popular enthusiasm for China's modernization, produce intelligent criticism, and, most especially, offer a balanced account of the country's course.

Much of the fault lies with the reformers themselves. Intent on using the press for their own purposes, as China's political factions have before, they had neither the confidence nor the vision to construct a truly free press in which not only the liberal reformers, but also their conservative opponents, would be free to argue their positions.

The Chinese press, then, remains the prize seized by the strongest. When push came to shove, the party apparatus that runs China was unwilling to relinquish command of the mass media. When the press, or at least the more liberal journalists and intellectuals, touched the central political nerve — the legitimacy of the party's claim to absolute power — the axes began to fall. ■

Issues of the Information Age:

The paradox of power.

The Information Age, for all its potential, has brought with it a new kind of problem. Often, the machines that contribute so much to the flood of information do little to help most of us cope with it. They are difficult to use, rigid in their demands, almost arrogant in their inability to work with any but their own kind. They are the muscle-bound tools of specialists.

In our view, the problem is not that the machines are too powerful for the rest of us. They are not powerful enough.

This is the paradox of power: the more powerful the machine, the less power it exerts over the person using it. We define a more powerful machine as one that is more capable of bending to the will of humans, rather than having humans bend to its will. The definition is deeply ingrained in AT&T. The telephone is such a powerful device precisely because it demands so little of its user.

AT&T foresees the day when the Information Age will become universal. People everywhere will participate in a worldwide Telecommunity. They will be able to handle information in any form—conversation, data, images, text—as easily as they now make a phone call.



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That day is coming closer. One example: scientists at AT&T Bell Laboratories are developing "associative" memories for computers, further enabling the machines to work with incomplete, imprecise, or even contradictory information. That's perfectly natural for a human. What makes it a breakthrough is that these computers won't ask you to be anything else.

Telecommunity is our goal.
Technology is our means.

We are committed to leading the way.





Some people just can't seem to let a good thing stand.

Take the Staggers Rail Act of 1980—one of the most successful pieces of legislation in history.

A group called Consumers United for Rail Equity (C.U.R.E.)—backed primarily by the coal and utilities industries—wants to take an ax to the Staggers Act.

They don't say that, of course. They say they want to "perfect" the act... "reform" it... "fine-tune" it.

But if you read the legislation they have proposed, you will quickly see that, in critical areas, they want to reimpose the same stifling regulation—and more—that almost destroyed the railroads.

Never mind that most railroad

customers—87 percent of those questioned in a recent survey—are happy with the Staggers Act and don't want it changed. Never mind the observable fact that the partial deregulation provided by the Act brought the railroads back from the brink of disaster, resulting in efficiencies and improved service for all who use rail.

Never mind, even, that the freedom to set rates and make contracts with less regulatory interference did not result in massive rate increases.

Many rates—coal and grain rates in particular—have gone down in recent years.

The interests represented by C.U.R.E. think they can use federal and state govern-

ments to lower their rates still further.

That's the real story behind C.U.R.E. But like anything else, there's no free lunch.

If C.U.R.E. succeeds, other shippers and the public as a whole will pay the price. In higher rates. Declining service. And, ultimately, in a railroad industry back on the brink of collapse.

To us that goes far beyond pruning and fine-tuning. And if you're a journalist covering this story, you'll find the facts for leaving Staggers intact are much more powerful than C.U.R.E.'s assertions for chopping it to bits.

To get facts, write Media Information, Association of American Railroads, 50 F St., NW, Washington, DC 20001, Dept. 714. Or if you're against a deadline, call (202) 639-2555.



ASSOCIATION OF
AMERICAN RAILROADS

THE POVERTY STORY

When the weather warms up
the homeless and the hungry fade from the news.
A look at how the press covers the poor

by MICHAEL MOSS

The tears hadn't yet dried in the CBS-TV screening room when Edward R. Murrow declared that the final scene was all wrong for his documentary on migrant farmworkers, "Harvest of Shame."

His colleagues were surprised. They had thought the effect of a young woman singing a sorrowful tune extraordinary. It tore at the heart. But Murrow didn't want to leave viewers feeling mere pity. He wanted anger. He wanted lasting concern. And he wanted viewers to understand the economic and political forces that kept migrants sleeping on piles of straw and their school-age children toiling in the fields.

Repeatedly in the film he drew attention to the dearth of laws protecting their welfare. So, in the final frames, Murrow subbed in the question, "Is it possible we think too much in terms of Christmas baskets and not in terms of eliminating poverty?" He then concluded: "The people you have seen have the strength to harvest your fruit and vegetables. They do not have the strength to influence legislation. Maybe we do. Good night, and good luck."

That was nearly three decades ago. The film aired the day after Thanksgiving in 1960, heralding a decade of social consciousness when the poor, among others, would emerge to capture national concern.

Now, in the eighties, we journalists have, once again, discovered the poor — or at least the more visible poor: the homeless, the hungry, those on welfare, and the so-called underclass. But an examination of the media's coverage of the poor shows that we have strayed from the standard set by "Harvest of Shame." A look at many of the thousands of print and broadcast pieces done in the past several years, as well as interviews with nearly two hundred journalists, poverty experts, and poor people, makes it clear that we are far better at simply discovering the poor than we are at explaining the causes of poverty and exploring the solutions.

The rare instances of reporting excellence — and there

are some stellar works — stand as proof that we can be doing a whole lot better.

The homeless: quick takes and close looks

The build-up of news stories about the homeless in the mid-1980s reached a crescendo in the winter of 1986-87. One reason was that there appeared to be more people on the streets than in previous years. Then, too, a succession of news pegs cropped up: President Reagan's remarks about one homeless family's \$37,000 transient-hotel tab; the March 3 "Grate American Sleep-Out," in which Washing-



Harvest of Shame: Ed Murrow's 1960 documentary on migrant workers was intended to arouse concern, not mere pity.

ton politicians and celebrities slept on the ground for a night; the fasts and other forms of protest by Mitch Snyder, the radical advocate for the poor who, for a time, became news himself. And, of course, we covered the homeless-shelter legislation, especially when it got glued to the congressional pay-raise bill.

As the weather grew colder, editors throughout the country seem to have felt obliged to order up a homeless story or series. So, on deadline, reporters bent down to interview doorway sleepers, roamed through shelters, even posed as street people for a day or two.

Perhaps the worst of the print-press lot turned up in *USA Today*, which on December 17, 1986, splattered America's homeless across a two-page layout that consisted of fifty mug shots, one from each state in typical *USA Today* style.

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25th Anniversary

This is one of
a series of articles examining important changes in the world
of American journalism during the past quarter century.



Michael Williamson/The Sacramento Bee

A winter's tale: The build-up of stories about the homeless reached a crescendo in the winter of 1986-87.

And, to go with the faces, most of them looking dejected, fifty little quotes: "Just an old hobo who came up to Alaska to say I've been there," Don R. Hughes in Alaska said of himself.

"We tried to [be] different. By that time everybody was doing something," Julia Wallace, a *USA Today* editor, says. The problem was that the spread, like most other homeless stories in most other papers and broadcasts, focused almost exclusively on the people — their personalities, their plight, their fears, and sometimes their hopes.

An accompanying article focused on private initiatives to house the homeless; a mere two sentences were devoted to the issue of declining public housing and the government's role in shoving people out onto the streets in the first place. (That the Gannett flagship can, on occasion, do a story in depth is attested by its week-long series beginning on March 23, 1987, a report on a three-month investigation into truck safety that went far beyond portraits of truckers at the wheel.)

Probably the worst of the TV coverage was turned in by Pat Harper, anchorwoman for WNBC-TV, New York, who donned tattered clothes and, with hidden cameras in tow, spent almost a week on the streets of Manhattan posing as a bag lady. Harper's commentary about how it felt *pretending* to be homeless, along with bathetic interviews with truly homeless people, ran as a series this past February, a ratings-sweeps month when advertising rates are determined and "news" segments such as "Sexaholics" run.

"This was not done for ratings," the show's managing producer was quoted as saying in response to the ensuing criticism. "We did not exploit the homeless." But the segments did exploit the homeless by not going beyond the pitiful portraits to explore and explain the politics and economics of homelessness.

There was Harper huddled up in the doorway, Harper shuffling down the sidewalk, Harper crying after someone handed her \$15. But there was no Harper pointing to the key government documents that shaped our current public housing or mental-health-care policies. Nor did she thrust

a microphone into the appropriate official's face for an explanation.

And, while WNBC-TV was neglecting important elements of the homeless story, the people Harper did talk to on park benches weren't told they were being interviewed. Thus, she violated their privacy and robbed them of their dignity to boot.

A more serious attempt than Harper's or *USA Today's*, but one that also was seriously flawed, was *The Atlanta Journal and Constitution's* November 2, 1986, series on the homeless. The articles cited the wholesale dismissal of the mentally ill from institutions as an important cause of homelessness. But, just as their readers might have begun to get curious about the failure of out-patient-care programs, or how elected officials justify their decisions, or what institutional solutions are at hand and (particularly important today) at what cost, the homeless were dropped like football after the Superbowl.

The point is not that we shouldn't portray and describe the homeless. That kind of reporting is essential. When done well — as in a thoughtful and unsentimental February 2, 1987, *Time* magazine portrait of homeless people on the streets of Philadelphia — it introduces our audience to strangers. Far more was accomplished in the winter's best single treatment of the homeless, a sixteen-page Thanksgiving Day package offered by *The Dallas Morning News*. It broke into the term "homeless" — a crude label — and pulled out the parts, including the elderly, the alcoholics, and the single mothers without homes. One article began: "In the maze of the mental health system, there may be detours through the streets, but all roads lead back to the state hospital. Audie Wheat, 65, knows her way by heart."

The Washington Post is another paper that has gone beyond mere recognition of the problem in its coverage of the homeless. On March 29 of this year, for example, in order to show how housing trends put poor people on the streets, the *Post* ran a long piece about the conversion of apartments into luxury dwellings and the effect that such gentrification



both: James Hamilton

Pity party: WNBC-TV anchorwoman Pat Harper (inset) posed as a bag lady (above, left), with hidden cameras in tow, for a week on the streets and subways of New York.



has had on the poor. The story, by Mary Jordan, also explained that increasing numbers of renters — 6.3 million, compared to 3.7 million ten years ago — spend more than half of their income for shelter. The *Post* followed up the next day with a look at “creative solutions” designed to provide decent housing in the face of the federal government’s indifference.

The New York Times has also dug deeply, albeit infrequently, into some of the causes of homelessness and followed up by pointing out solutions. On December 19, 1986, metro reporter Samuel Freedman examined the history of one Harlem tenement — five owners in six years, a sales price jump from \$6,000 to \$600,000, a revolving door for the tenants — to explain in microcosm New York’s rampant real estate speculation and its effects on the poor. Then, on December 27, Lydia Chavez reported on one innovative attack on speculation — the efforts by two young building owners to hold on to their Harlem tenement and make it profitable without inflating the rents.

It’s hard to prove that the press’s generally superficial coverage of the homeless results in superficial political decisions. It’s harder still to link news to public opinion. But it stands to reason that if the public associates the homeless merely with a need for emergency shelter, that’s what the homeless will get — a band-aid, and no prescription to cure the illness.

At this writing the trumpeted congressional action on the homeless includes some money for mental health care and for permanent housing solutions. But, by and large, the emphasis is on temporary beds in a dorm. And it’s a political truism that, as the weather warms up, the homeless issue will melt away. What will we say next winter, when the homeless return in even greater numbers? That we did our best?

Welfare: relying on the experts and other shortcuts

While thirty-three million-plus Americans now live below the official poverty line, those who qualify for Aid to Families with Dependent Children, the program commonly referred to as welfare, number fewer than eleven million.

But welfare gets an inordinate amount of the media’s attention because it, more than any other poverty story, is propelled into the political arena by two perennial triggers: legislative action, both for budgetary and reform purposes, and the reams of Census Bureau data that think tanks use to produce more reams of analysis. (For a good review of the current legislative wars over reform see “Welfare Reform: The Next Domestic Priority?” in *Congressional Quarterly*, September 27, 1986.)

As a result, perhaps, our stories tend to focus not on welfare per se, but on the political and ideological welfare debate — a debate over how much aid welfare recipients should get, and in what form, and what role the government should play in providing that aid.

This past February brought a flurry of such welfare-debate stories. The nation’s governors released a report. So did a conservative think tank. Then Reagan sent his welfare-reform proposal to Capitol Hill. WELFARE REFORMERS ON A



Dearth and plenty: The *Sacramento Bee* effectively contrasted depleted supplies at a food distribution center with a photo showing stacks of stored surplus farm goods.



ROLL, declared one headline. But while there were plenty of stories about those efforts at reform, I saw no case in which an editor had thought to send a reporter out to examine firsthand this matter of welfare and the persisting charges of fraud, inefficiency, and perpetuation of dependency.

The press did pay some attention to the Massachusetts job-training program for welfare recipients, since “workfare” is being touted by conservatives and liberals alike as a possible solution to dependency. But reporters have relied almost exclusively on the “experts” for analysis. *Newsweek*, for example, in a two-page February 2, 1987, article, quoted only Governor Michael Dukakis, two lower state officials, Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and a Washington think-tanker to assess the program and also workfare in general. If any correspondent perused the books, or sat in on a training class, or spoke with more than one trainee, it didn’t show in the piece.

The Washington Post that same month took a harder look, pointing out that Governor Dukakis, who was starting to behave like a presidential candidate, had a political stake in making the program look good, and that welfare advo-

cates had filed suit claiming that the state was, in effect, abandoning those people who aren't helped by the training program. Earlier, in November 1986, on the eve of the welfare-reform debate, the *Post* had run an excellent two-part series by reporter Karlyn Barker showing how one job-training program had, in many respects, done a poor job of training Washington's hard-core unemployed.

Even the *Post*, however, has yet to turn loose some of its 540-person newsroom staff (as many as twenty-eight of whom were reportedly put on the Iranscam story) to really probe the welfare system. In fact, even if we count Frederick Wiseman's stunning documentary "Welfare," aired by the

Public Broadcasting Service in 1975, so few are the stories on the welfare system that the observation by *The New York Times's* veteran labor analyst, A.H. Raskin, in 1961 — that there had been "no significant re-examination" of the system since the 1930s — largely still stands.

A search for stories that probed records or analyzed welfare budgets and cases, or even merely seemed to involve a reporter spending a chunk of time in a welfare office, found only these: a six-part, March 1984 series in the Baltimore *Evening Sun*, and a February 9 and 10, 1987, series in the *Los Angeles Times* about Asian

Hunger in America — 1967 to 1987

The sharpest spurs in the media's side to do stories on hunger — apart from the occasional utterance by Edwin Meese that hunger is a liberal myth — have been the periodic commissions, field investigations, and assorted studies issued by experts.

The late 1960s saw a succession of such excursions into the rural South. They produced two of the finest pieces to date of enterprise journalism dealing with hunger.

In 1967, Senators Joseph Clark and Robert Kennedy visited the Delta of Mississippi, just south of Memphis, and Nick Kotz was there for *The Des Moines Register*. In a four-part series that ran in February 1968, he reported on the eighty Negro families who lived on a plantation owned by the family of Mississippi's U.S. Senator James O. Eastland, and on the paternalistic system that kept them in destitution and debt.

Kotz won the first award in print journalism of the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards. He then wrote *Let Them Eat Promises*, a book that more than fulfilled its own introductory promise: "This story concerns the politics of hunger in affluent America. It is the story of how some leaders left their air-conditioned sanctuaries, discovered hunger among the poor, and determined to make it into a national issue; of other men who knew about hunger but lied; of still others who learned about hunger but voted for fiscal economy at the expense of the hungry poor."

Homer Bigart of *The New York Times* took a similarly aggressive tack in his 1969 front-page series on hunger. It was apparently prompted by the Field Foundation investigation of the previous year, which found extensive hunger in rural America. But, like Kotz, Bigart went far beyond the foundation's work to zero in on elected officials — not the hungry themselves — in his search for explanations as to why people were going hungry. He drove home the point that, for many officials and citizens alike, it is easier to deny there are hungry Americans than it is to ask how and why they exist.

"Chronic hunger seems so remote in this bounteous land that reports of extreme malnutrition among Negroes in the rural South, among migrant farm workers, among Mexican-Americans and reservation Indians have been set down as exaggerations and lies, the observers frequently assailed as

charlatans or do-gooders who would sap the initiative of the hungry poor by expanding 'give-away' federal food programs or even conspiring for adoption of a guaranteed minimum wage," Bigart wrote in the first of five articles that would take *Times* readers from South Carolina to Tuba City, Arizona.

In 1984 and '85, the media again followed the experts into the world of the hungry when the Physician Task Force on Hunger in America at Harvard University's School of Public Health went over the Field Foundation's tracks and found that the number of hungry Americans, after subsiding in the late 1970s, was again on the rise.

In the seven weeks after the group released its report in late February 1985, according to a media survey, the task force and its findings were the subject of more than 1,000 news reports, mostly from the wire services, as well as a great many editorials and op-ed pieces. Included in the count were thirty-one network and ninety-three local TV news programs. (CNN was first with a thirty-minute documentary on February 25, 1985. The following evening, NBC led the *Nightly News* with a five-minute segment and ABC's *World News Tonight* gave the story two minutes midway through the broadcast. CBS followed up six weeks later.)

Deborah Allen, a spokeswoman for the task force, says that, overall, she was pleased with the coverage. Most of the stories, she says, were "enormously sympathetic to the people we were seeing."

But, as in the 1960s, the bulk of the coverage was limited to the task force's visit and its findings. Typical was an October 1984 Mobile, Alabama, *Register* piece headlined DOCTOR SAYS MILLIONS ARE STARVING, which cited and quoted only one source — the chairman of the task force. There was no independent or local corroboration; it's doubtful that the words of a Harvard doctor alone set very well in Dixie.

Somewhat more convincing was a Conroe, Texas, *Courier* piece by reporter Cathy Gordon, also based on the Harvard group's visit. It led off with a portrait of a family of five living on leftover Halloween candy and food scavenged from grocery store dumpsters. A United Way official was quoted on the subject of the widening gap between rich and poor. The many types of people who go hungry were

refugees who were working while getting welfare. There are probably more, but not many.

What happened is this: welfare was hot in the sixties, when the story was politics and legislative maneuvering and the infancy of programs; but, as it grew into an established administrative story — a story harder to do and one that called for good writing to capture and hold the reader's attention — welfare as news died.

And it died at the very time that stories about welfare fraud and administrative mistakes — inevitable in any new venture — could have helped iron out the inefficiencies that officials are struggling with today.

listed. It was noted — in a sentence — that state records showed 159 people had died of malnutrition in the past year. Two causes of hunger were cited: a local population boom and insufficient employment. The final paragraphs listed several private charities that needed donations.

In a paper with a daily circulation of just over 10,000, such reporting is commendable. The *Courier* reporter certainly didn't have the experience and resources of a Bigart or Kotz to plow into the policy decisions that perpetuate hunger. (She might, however, have told us more about those 159 deaths.) But larger news organizations have no excuse for not going beyond the advocacy-group probes to do their own investigative work.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment last year was the Providence, Rhode Island, *Journal-Bulletin* series "Hungry in America" by national writer Carol McCabe, which ran for six days starting May 18, 1986. An account of her seven-week, ten-state tour, the series focused on the hungry and on the people helping to feed them. McCabe wrote about Americans with "holes in their walls" and "holes in their souls."

Indeed, her sympathy ran so deep that she regularly took groceries to the people she interviewed, which, unfortunately, impaired the credibility of her reporting, suggestive as her gifts were of a kind of checkbook journalism.

But it's not so much what McCabe did; it's what she — or rather, the paper — did not do. Although *Journal-Bulletin* readers would undoubtedly sense that something had gone wrong with the government's programs, they weren't told exactly what, or why, or by whose hand and decisions. The paper only reported the complaints about excessive red tape, inaccessible offices, and overloaded caseworkers.

The *Sacramento Bee*, on the other hand, followed up. For six months, as many as nineteen *Bee* reporters roamed through the Golden State. And their report — a nine-part series that ran above the fold on a succession of weekdays and Sundays beginning February 22, 1987 — documented that 2.3 million Californians had to regularly seek out emergency food banks to stave off hunger. "In the richest state in the nation, hunger is a chronic reality," the series began in a refreshingly unsentimental tone.

If we're not contributing to the analysis of welfare, we're doing even less to digest and translate the analysis. Few are the reporters who know that the government uses two different sets of numbers and systems to determine who is statistically poor, and who qualifies for the government aid programs. Fewer still are those who can sort through such terms as illegitimacy, birth rate, birth ratio, and fertility, which when used incorrectly — as they sometimes are by experts who have ideologies to support — give a skewed picture of such critical issues as teenage motherhood and the trends in pregnancy.

When it comes to picking through the high-math computer

Steve Haines/The Providence Journal-Bulletin



Scraping by: This Arkansas couple — profiled in a *Providence Journal-Bulletin* series — keeps food on the table by hunting, fishing, and growing and canning vegetables.

Then the reporters showed in detail that those food banks are overwhelmed, turning away thousands; that the food stamp program is failing to reach two million people who qualify, in part because efforts to reach them have been blocked by state law; that the federal stockpiles of surplus food were built to subsidize farmers, not feed the hungry, thus creating an inefficient and convoluted system; and that now the feds want to cut back even that minimal effort.

Still, even the *Bee* only began to investigate hunger. Each year someone wins an advocacy group's award for reporting on the hungry. But someone has yet to win a science-reporting award for tracing the medical histories of indigent patients to pinpoint the effects of hunger, or a business-reporting award for looking into the role that agribusiness has played in the hunger story, or a community-service award for showing the effectiveness of private food charities as compared to government programs, or a political-reporting award for asking Congress, in effect: Why, in the world's richest nation, is large-scale preventable hunger permitted?

M.M.

analyses that ideological groups throw at each other with dot-matrix abandon, the reporters you can trust number two: Robert Pear of *The New York Times* and Spencer Rich of *The Washington Post*.

"They're in a class by themselves, [being] sophisticated enough to challenge" the most complex poverty study, says Keith McKeown who, as public affairs director for the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a Washington think tank highly regarded for the accuracy of its studies, conducts informal briefings for a dozen or so Washington-based reporters with an interest in poverty.

It's not that the rest of us are stupid. It's that we're not given the time even to "walk through" the numbers and issues with an expert.

Squeezing the poor into prime time

This example may be extreme, but consider the case of Jim Wooten, a long-time *New York Times* reporter who joined

ABC-TV seven years ago as a correspondent based in Washington.

On Monday, December 22, Wooten got a call from a producer in New York who asked him to come to the city to do a piece on the haves and have-nots. "It was scheduled to run Christmas, or the day after," Wooten recalls. "So I went to New York late that afternoon. We were scheduled to shoot on Tuesday. I checked into a hotel. Then I get a call at about seven P.M. to go back to D.C. because on Tuesday they wanted me to do a story on the president's age, as to whether it's a factor in his problems."

Wooten flew back to Washington, where he worked on the president's-age piece on Tuesday and Wednesday; meanwhile, his producer and crew were shooting poverty footage in New York and Washington, as were bureaus in Atlanta, Chicago, and Dallas. "On Wednesday we give up on the age piece. We just couldn't make it work. So on Christmas Eve I go back to the haves and have-nots piece.

The underclass

One of the hottest poverty stories of the mid-1980s has been "the underclass." The term was coined forty years ago to describe those ghetto blacks who — for racial and economic reasons — were effectively barred from the labor market. Computer searches of the major newspapers and magazines show just a handful of references to the word prior to 1981. Then, *New Yorker* writer Ken Auletta produced 90,000 words about underclass men and women, most of them blacks and Hispanics, many of whom cannot hold jobs even when they get them — a rogue citizenry of sorts, which for generations has existed outside the traditional labor economy — and thereafter the print media's use of the word soared, from 21 references in 1979 to 400 last year.

Some extraordinary works of journalism were produced as reporters dipped into the strange world of the truly disenfranchised. Among them: the *Chicago Tribune's* thirty-two part series, "The American Millstone," which picked apart a black West Side neighborhood and found what R.C. Longworth, who worked on the project, describes as a class of people "so isolated that it doesn't even know where the door [to opportunity] is, much less how to walk through it"; Bill Moyers's January 1986 CBS-TV documentary, "The Vanishing Family: Crisis in Black America," which portrayed New Jersey youths who needed teenaged motherhood for self-esteem and to fill their otherwise empty lives; *The Christian Science Monitor's* twenty-eight page report last November on the hard-core unemployed in four ghettos, "Exiles Among Us," which editor Katherine Fanning has described as the paper's biggest effort of 1986; twenty-five pages in *Newsweek's* March 23 issue (the third-longest story ever published in a regular weekly issue of the magazine) on the lives of eleven black men who survived the grimmest of Chicago's housing projects with varying degrees of success.

The reaction to those reports was predictably mixed. Some black leaders and journalists accused the media of

equating poverty, crime, and teenage motherhood with black skin. "We go to certain communities for certain things," says Earl Caldwell, a columnist for the *New York Daily News*. "So Bill Moyers walks over to Newark and gets some guy to say, 'Yeah, I'm King Kong and I make babies.' " Others have praised the reports for illuminating a too-often ignored segment of society.

But those major investigations appeared during a time when the press at large was rushing to cover the underclass as the latest poverty "crisis." As a result of this rush, a lot of the journalism was sloppy and potentially mischievous.

For one thing, some of us perceived a trend where there may be none. Several recent stories, including one in *The Christian Science Monitor* on February 13, 1987, have re-

Down and out in Chicago: In a once-bustling community gone bust, collecting scrap metal provides a meager income.



Ovie Carter/Chicago Tribune



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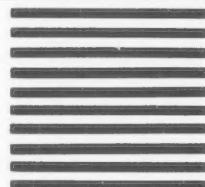
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In my view it's ruined. I have a sheaf [of briefing papers and reports] one-and-a-half inches thick that I haven't even read. But on Christmas afternoon I read all the stuff, and Christmas night I sat down and started to write."

The story aired on Friday evening, December 26, and in Wooten's opinion it was "a terrible piece. The script was miserable, I was tired. The rush of time. We had two minutes and fifteen seconds, quite insufficient time to do something complex like that. It didn't do anything except put on the network some rather well-shot pictures of affluence and deprivation."

Flawed as it was, Wooten's was the only significant piece on poverty in the U.S. aired by ABC's *World News Tonight* during the last ten evenings in 1986 — a period that in years past was heavy with poverty reports. NBC's *Nightly News* and the *CBS Evening News* did little more. There is additional evidence that television may be backing off from even the most basic coverage of the poor. Eighteen years ago —

ported that the underclass is "growing," while offering no evidence to back that claim. In fact, there is no such conclusive evidence.

Also, the word "underclass" has come to be casually invoked to conjure up a vague sense of menace. Thus, in an April 19, 1987, *New York Times Sunday Magazine* article about second homes, Erica Abeel wrote that among the reasons for escaping Manhattan was the fear of "a swelling underclass overflowing into the best neighborhoods."

Moreover, the least careful journalists have broadened the originally narrow application of the word to include everyone who is poor. When *U.S. News & World Report* on March 26, 1984, looked at the underclass in a piece headlined "The Desperate World of America's Underclass," among those cited as belonging to that world and class were the homeless, all poor children, Indians, former auto workers, and even the working poor whose low wages kept them below the poverty line.

The point to remember, say poverty experts like Sheldon Danziger, director of the Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin, is that the underclass may constitute no more than 10 percent of all the poor. For them, the traditional poverty-fighting efforts like welfare and even job training cannot be counted on to work. Bold steps may be needed to pull the underclass back into society, as John Herbers of *The New York Times* observed in an April 27, 1987, report on a Dallas plan to destroy 2,600 units of crumbling public housing and disperse the tenants.

But when we brand as a member of the underclass anyone and everyone who is poor — and it is a brand, with its implication that these Americans are doomed to lead utterly impoverished lives — our careless usage makes it appear that welfare and job training and public housing work for *no one* who is poor. That makes our job — explaining all types of poverty and the solutions that do work — unnecessarily harder. M.M.

on New Year's Eve 1968, when 12.8 percent of Americans were statistically poor — poverty was cited by NBC as one of the four major issues of the previous year. But on New Year's Eve 1986 — despite the higher poverty rate of 14 percent — not one of the networks in their wrap-ups on the old year's important stories mentioned anything that pertained directly to the poor and their world. Two exceptions: ABC wedged in a shot of "Hands Across America" betwixt Iranscam and the Statue of Liberty ceremonies, and NBC ran a shot of third world starvation.

Just as the homeless as news have melted like snow with the arrival of warmer weather, it's possible that poverty as a television news story is sliding into another cyclical trough, as it did in the mid-1970s.

That would be regrettable because, while the networks seldom go beyond mere point-and-weep poverty stories, television, more effectively than print, can touch the public's heart, if not necessarily enlarge its mind.

In 1985, *60 Minutes*, as well as CNN and two network news programs, ran segments on "Sugar Ditch," the black slum in Tunica, Mississippi, a Delta town where whites are overwhelmingly richer than blacks. The footage of tumbling shacks alongside an open sewer was shocking.

The viewer response was tremendous and Sugar Ditch bumped even the nation's increasing number of bankrupt farmers to become the year's most compelling poverty story. The town was inundated with gifts of used clothing and food. Moreover, a dozen families were moved into mobile homes and, at this writing, new rent-subsidized housing is being built for many of those still left in Sugar Ditch.

True, these are little more than palliatives. But residents say that this aid was far better than nothing, and that without television's attention and the ensuing charity, their efforts to achieve more fundamental changes — to attract industry, improve the public schools, and obtain decent health care — would have been hindered by the daily struggle merely to survive in roach-infested, plumbless shacks.

So the catch is this: given the choice of a soppy "Harvest of Shame" or no coverage at all, clearly poor people and those who care about their plight would opt for the sop. But, just as clearly, that doesn't absolve the media from offering more.

Fresh approaches to a downbeat story

There is something lacking in most of today's coverage of poverty that distinguished the finest of years past — Jacob Riis's uncondescending report on Manhattan tenement dwellers in the 1890s, Upton Sinclair's searing account of Chicago slaughterhouse workers, James Agee's impassioned communion with three southern families in the Depression, Elliot Liebow's brilliant study of street-corner men in the 1960s, Jay McMullen's 1967 television documentary on life in a Chicago walk-up.

They all cared, deeply, for the people whose lives and problems they reported on. But they also were scrupulously honest in their reporting, often noting fault and virtue within the same person in a way that cut through preconception and prejudice. By comparison, much of today's poverty



The crunch: Jim Wooten of ABC News did a December 26 piece on the haves and have-nots which was "terrible," he says, largely because he lacked time to prepare the story.

coverage is either shallow and distanced, written by reporters who seem to have snatched only brief conversations with poor people for an anecdotal lead, or it is condescendingly sugary.

The worst of our stories smack of the 1950s television show *Queen for a Day*, in which five women contestants each told a tale of want or misery, and the audience — via an applause meter — then chose the most pathetic.

In one episode, a Mrs. Brewer scored a zippy eight on a one-to-ten scale for her haltingly told story about a sick husband, four kids, no food in the pantry, and a pending eviction. So she won — along with a grocery spree and six months' rent money — a night on the town, a trip to Arizona to attend a screening of a new movie, a flatware set, and a bunch of long-stem roses.

Nowadays, "queens" can be found in newspaper stories and on the evening news. Yet, while their tales may be heartrending, the queens themselves are hardly credible witnesses when it comes to explaining poverty, its causes, and what can be done to solve a national problem of great urgency.

"She sits at the kitchen table, hunkered down over a cup of coffee, her face a mirror of misery," read the lead of a December 13, 1986, Buffalo, New York, *News* story about one family hurt by a meat-packing plant strike.

Compare that lead with this opening paragraph of an April 1985 *Milwaukee Journal* series about poor people who couldn't pay fines: "Thousands of people neither accused of crimes nor represented by lawyers are jailed in Milwaukee County every year." The reporter, Nina Bernstein, now with *New York Newsday*, was clearly angered — not merely moved to pity — by the situation, and she took a hard-news approach to a story that would have been weakened by a lead that portrayed someone sulking in a cell.

Much of what's wrong with the tone of our poverty reporting can be corrected by writing around the all-too-tempting tear-jerking lead, says Don Fry, an associate director of the Florida-based Poynter Institute for Media Studies. Fry, who faults the press for "looking for the grotesque,"

suggests using the geographic scene-setter in describing a neighborhood, or a housing project, or an entire town instead of one suffering person.

The Des Moines Register a few years ago opened a series on inflation with the lead "Fort Dodge remembers 1969 with nostalgia." Nicholas Lemann led off his *Atlantic* magazine series last summer, "The Origins of the Underclass," by describing how four decades have changed the corner of 47th and King Drive in Chicago.

Master of the grabber lead, *The Wall Street Journal* knows how to convert the seemingly deadeast of issues into a riveting tale. Consider this lead to an April 13, 1987, story on yet another farm foreclosure story: "Early this year, the Rev. Frank Cordaro in Logan, Iowa, granted sanctuary to a manure spreader.

"Rev. Cordaro hauled the spreader from a parishioner's farm and parked it on the lawn of his St. Anne's Catholic Church so that the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. wouldn't repossess it to settle a loan from a failed bank. 'I'd like to see more people bring equipment to churchyards and make the FDIC take it off,' he says. 'They're breaking people out here.'"

Using a variety of imaginative approaches, the *Journal* in recent months has brought to the attention of its executive readers the growing rift between the lower and upper classes; the hostile community reaction to the homeless; the consequences of underpaying social workers; and the deviant, pathological culture of, no, not the poor, but the suburban middle class.

Employing a different but also effective approach, *The Christian Science Monitor* backs into poverty issues with upbeat stories about poverty-fighting efforts — a corporate adopt-a-tenement program in Houston; a Queens pastor who trains formerly criminal youths to operate legitimate floral shops; a bank that dares do business in inner-city Detroit.

John Herbers, a veteran reporter for *The New York Times*, has shown that some of the causes of urban poverty can best be explained in the context of today's economy and labor-market scene. So, to debunk any myths about the new service-sector economy being a boon to everyone, Herbers has turned to economists who have found that service-sector jobs are largely closed to inner-city youths who lack the requisite training, and that, as a result, there's a widening gap between the very rich and the very poor in many large cities.

One aspect of the poverty story that remains to be explored is the migration pattern of people. It is no longer possible to draw a circle around Appalachia, say, and look only within for explanations of how and why so many of its mountain people are poor and have little prospect of finding new jobs. To understand their predicament, we must consider the Rustbelt and Wyoming and Alaska, places to which laid-off coal miners have fled in past years to find employment, until, one after the other, those boom regions went bust.

The anguish many hundreds of West Virginians and eastern Kentuckians now face is not over leaving their beloved

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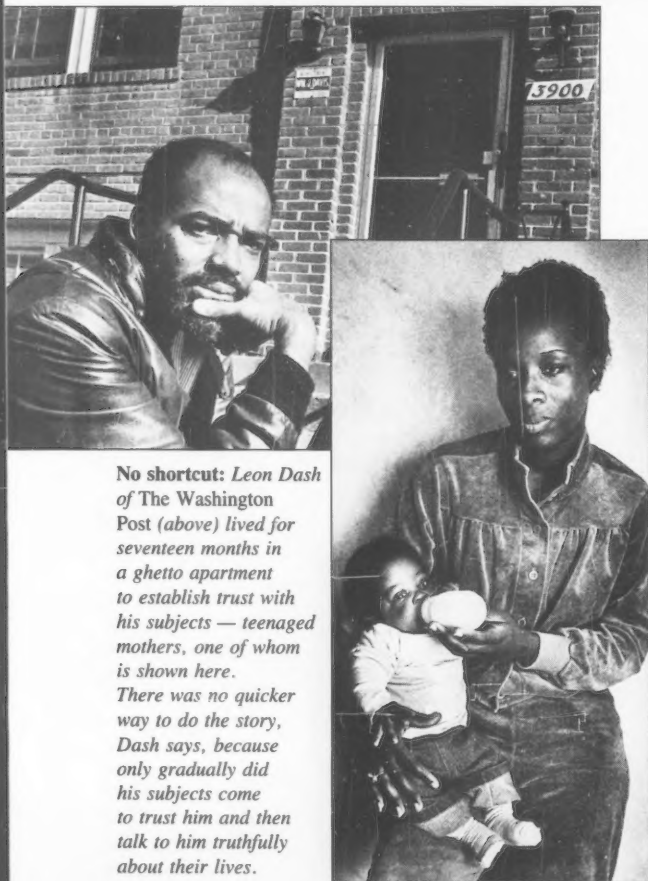
hills to find jobs in strange places. Rather, it is over the lack of a choice. Such meccas of boom don't exist today, anywhere, for people with their skills.

Whether it's inner-city Chicago or Detroit, or the rural South, knowing where people come from and where they can go is critical to understanding why they stay and what sort of help they will need if they are to earn a living elsewhere.

Barriers . . . and how some have surmounted them

Perhaps the biggest challenge for reporters, however, is forcing ourselves to cross the barrier between classes. Doing so seems ever more difficult, especially for the increasingly affluent big-city journalist. We need more reporters who aren't ill at ease with the poor and can hang out on street corners with the unemployed.

Maybe a "Saturday-night rotation" into poverty for the rest of us who don't cover poverty issues regularly would help us to see how general news events and policies affect the poor. We rarely do, now. But the story potential is high, as Penelope McMillan of the *Los Angeles Times* showed in a November 23, 1986, front-page story about a new earthquake safety law, and the prospect that landlords would abandon up to 34,000 low-income apartment units rather than do the required reinforcement work.



No shortcut: Leon Dash of *The Washington Post* (above) lived for seventeen months in a ghetto apartment to establish trust with his subjects — teenaged mothers, one of whom is shown here. There was no quicker way to do the story, Dash says, because only gradually did his subjects come to trust him and then talk to him truthfully about their lives.

both: Fred Sweet's/The Washington Post

The world of the poor, be it the urban homeless or the rural jobless, is so different from that of most reporters that poverty reporting may require massive sums of time merely for us to find our way in. Consider Leon Dash of *The Washington Post*, who to establish trust with his subjects lived in a roach-plagued ("It took three bombings") District of Columbia ghetto apartment — in the tradition of sociologists Elliot Liebow (*Tally's Corner*) and Carol Stack (*All Our Kin*) — until the teenaged mothers he was profiling, and the adult women who had had children in their teens, dropped their defenses and spoke truthfully about themselves.

"I thought I could do it within four months. My editor said six. It took seventeen," says Dash, who initially interviewed thirteen families, then cut back to six.

"There was no quicker way to do it," he insists. "The problem is that we went along for months until I had established a relationship, and then everyone changed, dramatically changed the first story they had told me. They directly contradicted their public face."

Some editors scoff at the time Dash took. They say that in less than a week their reporters have collected some of the same facts that, as Dash found, debunked the myths that teenaged mothers were ignorant of birth control methods or that they had children to get more welfare.

But these reporters' stories are shallow compared to the depth conveyed in Dash's series, a 1987 Pulitzer finalist. And that depth would have been unattainable had he not spent enough time with his subjects to be able to break through stereotypes.

"Most people assume that, because they see a welfare woman dressed in a particular way or wearing expensive clothes, she used welfare money to buy those clothes," he told me recently. "Impossible. It's impossible to feed her children and pay her rent and feed herself on welfare and buy those clothes."

"I found that a lot of poor women have a very clear and explicit economic relationship with any man they spend time with. And that man is expected to supplement those needs that welfare does not meet, including buying a constant stream of sweaters, dungarees, slacks, dresses, jewelry, a VCR, those kinds of things."

"And once the gifts, the material expressions or material reassurance, end or slow up, she ends her relationship with that man, to begin looking for another who can supplement her welfare, and reassure her that he has an emotional commitment to her, with a stream of gifts."

Dale Maharidge, a *Sacramento Bee* reporter, found he had to ride rail, bus, and clunker cross-country to find and document a human stream as desperate in its search for work as the migration chronicled by John Steinbeck in *The Grapes of Wrath*. Similarly, only by immersing himself in New York's slum life was Denis Hamill, a reporter-columnist for *New York Newsday*, able to produce the kind of dialogue and first-person reporting that made Owen Kildare's 1906 book, *My Old Bailywick*, moving but unsentimental.

Describing Manhattan's Third Street Men's shelter in a March 30, 1987, piece, Hamill wrote: "The street was a

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The Sigma Delta Chi Foundation is accepting applications for the Eugene C. Pulliam Fellowship, a grant of \$10,000 awarded annually to an outstanding editorial writer to help broaden his or her journalistic horizons and knowledge of the world through travel or study.

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The Fellowship honors the memory of Eugene C. Pulliam (1889-1975), who was publisher of *The Arizona Republic*, *The Phoenix Gazette*, *The Indianapolis Star*, *The Indianapolis News*, *The Muncie Star*, *The Muncie Evening Press*, and the *Vincennes Sun-Commercial*. Pulliam was one of ten DePauw University students who in 1909 founded Sigma Delta Chi, now The Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi. Today, more than 23,000 journalists are members of SPJ,SDX.

The Fellowship was made possible through a grant from Mrs. Eugene C. Pulliam.

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C.R. Harvey Wang

Notes from underground: Jim Dwyer explores lives many papers ignore by writing a thrice-weekly column for *New York Newsday* on life in the city's subway system.

bedlam of people sitting on red plastic milk crates, junkies scratching their genitals, winos gulping their hooch, crackheads dancing in frantic circles, transvestites flirting with anything wearing shoes, lunatics babbling to themselves. Every stoop in this open-air asylum of misery was cluttered with the rear-ends of unwashed pants, blackened bare feet, and spilled wine and urine. You are once again etherized by the smell."

Few such stories go so far as to propose solutions for the problems they report. That may or may not be the media's job. But by regularly reporting on the poor and the disenfranchised today, Dash and Hamill and the handful of other Dickensian journalists are defying the notion that poverty as news is a downer, is stale, is "already done."

They also show that the poor and their world offer a new frontier for reporting that is every bit as challenging and demanding of bravery and boldness as covering war or politics or the next scandal. Granted, hanging out on street corners is not the traditional route to journalism's brand of tenure: an editorship. The accumulation of editorial power for many seems to come from covering society's powerful.

While reporters need to learn how to cross class barriers, editors need to figure out how to integrate poverty into their daily news budgets. Or, as *Atlanta Journal* and *Constitution* editor Bill Kovach says, "cover poverty the way we cover sports."

New York Newsday is arguably doing more than any other paper today to report on the poor and disenfranchised of all sorts. On just one day, May 3, 1987, the tabloid ran a five-page start to a series about aliens and the possible problems with the new legalization program; an exposé of an errant court order that was forcing homeless families to bounce between hotels "where families can't check in until the prostitutes check out"; a three-page report on the rampant truancy in New York City's public schools system, and the way in which truancy perpetuates poverty; a report of a

public housing conference at which speakers linked the decline in federal funding to homelessness; and these three pieces by columnists: a backgrounder on the youths whom Bernhard Goetz was accused of assaulting, another on the Queens neighborhood where a city shelter for homeless babies was torched, and another of Jim Dwyer's thrice-weekly reports on life in the New York subway, which this spring earned him a glowing front-page review in *The Wall Street Journal*.

The editors of *New York Newsday*, while having an obvious commitment to examining and reporting on the structural causes of poverty, do have an edge over the editors of newspapers in many other cities. The city they cover does not lack advocates for the poor or politicians who have taken up the cause of, at least, the homeless. By contrast, the editors of the Nashville *Tennessean* three years ago showed what could be done in a more typical environment: a political community that refused even to consider an issue of crucial importance to the poor. In what was perhaps the only recent instance of old-fashioned newspaper crusading, *The Tennessean* on March 4, 1984, began an attack on the state's welfare payment levels — last among the fifty states — and didn't let up, running stories almost daily for weeks, until the legislature agreed to raise the payments and the governor, reversing himself, signed the legislation.

Other newspapers and the network news programs do look at the poor. The problem is that even when they do a first-rate piece of reporting, one that digs and probes and challenges assumptions, it is confined to a few minutes of prime time or to a single day's splash. The ripples fade into the next commercial or headline. And we return to the regular news about affairs of state and people of fame and fortune, slamming the journalistic door on the 57 million Americans living near or below the poverty line until someone in the newsroom decides, as John Fetterman wrote of the media's periodic curiosity about Appalachia, to "get some poverty stuff."

Every year since its inception in 1969, the Robert F. Kennedy Journalism Awards contest for reporting on the underprivileged has received some 300 entries from newspapers and magazines, somewhat fewer from radio and television. If that seems a lot, consider that the Kennedy is one of the very few awards programs aimed at encouraging stories on the poor and powerless, that many of the entries are unimpressive, and that there are 1,657 newspapers and more than 11,000 radio and television broadcasters producing or conveying news 365 days in the year. The indictment is this: the press on poverty, by several estimates, totals a mere 1 percent of the news that we churn out.

Even Ed Murrow failed to etch the message of "Harvest of Shame" into the nation's conscience. The film came and went as a one-time usurpation of *The Twilight Zone*, and the political ripples were quickly spent. The media, especially television, must say the same thing over and over for it to sink in.

To not do so, and to fail to address the structural causes of poverty in anything but human-interest terms, is to never get beyond the state of merely discovering the poor, again and again. ■

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BOOKS

The fall of the House of Murrow

Bad News at Black Rock:

The Sell-out of CBS News

by Peter McCabe

Arbor House. 302 pp. \$17.95

In the Storm of the Eye:

A Lifetime at CBS

by Bill Leonard

G. P. Putnam's Sons. 240 pp. \$18.95

by JERRY M. LANDAY

While both were presumably at work on their respective journals, former *CBS Morning News* senior producer Peter McCabe phoned former CBS News president Bill Leonard to elicit his perspective on the fall of the great House that Murrow and his men built.

McCabe recalls Leonard telling him: "I always thought of CBS News as an institution, and when I left I always hoped it would continue to be one."

"'Do you still think it is?' I asked him.

"Leonard chuckled: 'That's for you to figure out.'"

The title of McCabe's book leaves no doubt that he had figured it out for himself before reaching for the phone. Leonard's evasion suggests, as does his book, that a lifetime of loyalties at CBS News, if nothing else, breeds caution and restraint. Unfortunately, Leonard provides no trenchant analysis of the great questions which must have haunted him as he moved up the line from production executive to senior manager, and, eventually, chief executive of the division — questions about the responsibilities of a

primary American information provider in an increasingly Barnum and Bailey world. One must work one's way through 231 pages and thirty-seven years of Leonard's career, performing exegetical interpolations en route, before discovering in the last few pages that he shares many of McCabe's conclusions.

McCabe is not muffled by such Tory predilections. Previously a print journalist for Reuters and *Rolling Stone*, and a former managing editor of *Harper's* magazine, in 1985 he invested better than a year in a new medium of opportunity in the face of repeated warnings from friends and bosses alike that he wouldn't like it.

He didn't. CBS News let him down. And he is angry.

McCabe is an expert eyewitness, testifying about a CBS News that was in the process of becoming the purge-ridden, strife-torn victim of "management misjudgments," myopic self-interest, and journalistic misfeasance — a division stripped of purpose and credibility, and paralyzed by clashing goals and the aimlessness of a corporate culture without a value system.

He portrays the leaders of the news division demanding stronger showings in the ratings by a *Morning News* perennially in third place, even as they fire staff and divert resources to Dan Rather's *Evening News*. Division president Edward Joyce demands that the program stress amusement values at the expense of news, then reverses himself and orders an executive producer to re-establish its authority as a news program.

McCabe is most eloquent in describing the human and professional wreckage this produced at the working level. Not long before he is fired by executive producer Susan Winston — who herself would subsequently depart in dishonor — he tells a colleague that he is mired in a medium of "lies, bullshit, hypocrisy, star worship, treachery. . . ."

Leonard eschews such grand passions, though in the final pages he finally unlimbers to decry an organization under chairman Thomas Wyman, broadcast group head Gene Jankowski, and his own immediate successors, Van Gordon Sauter and Ed Joyce (he does not name them directly), that "is [trading] away its aspirations and its high standards for quick fixes." Having abandoned the concept of "duty," top management "appeared to have come to regard CBS News as almost more trouble than it was worth, and the management of the news division itself began to think of it as just a step on the corporate ladder."

What Leonard does do, without comment, without regard to cause and effect, seemingly unconsciously, is to suggest some of the devolutionary reasons for post-Murrowian decline: the glorification of anchorpersons and stars, to the detriment of product and staff; the adulteration of journalistic values by amusement values; the elimination of the documentary as a major news form by executives fearful of controversy; and the tilt to pictures at the expense of information and understanding.

In *Bad News*, McCabe provides a rare critical view of the ravages of all this — the gore behind the glamour. His *Morning News* becomes a metaphor for the agonies of what is less the nation's once-most-respected news division than, in Jankowski's phrase, a "value system." The reality McCabe describes is evocative of an electronic *Animal House*, the chaotic embodiment of the amoral organizational nightmare prefigured in Paddy Chayefsky's *Network*.

All is hubbub and hubris. Anchors assassinate executive producers. Management gives notice to talent by press leak. What goes out on the air emerges from aimless, manic conversation that passes for planning conferences in production offices and control room. There is the stunned silence of delayed comprehension when, in one of video's most singular moments, anchor Phyllis George asks a falsely accused rapist and his repentant accuser to "hug."

"Were we on the air when she said that?" a colleague finally asks.

Jerry M. Landay served as a correspondent at CBS News for eight years. He has also been a correspondent at ABC News, and chief foreign correspondent for the Group W stations. He currently heads a firm which produces documentaries for corporations and institutions.

"We sure were," McCabe replies.

In McCabe's account we meet the real-life counterpart of Diana Christensen, the senior female executive of *Network*. She is Susan Winston, brought in to take command of *Morning News*, who tells a battered and burned-out staff: "Understand this, I've been brought in here to get ratings, and I'll do anything, anything, to get ratings. . . ."

To that end, she wants to show a Geiger count being taken on one of a group of young Americans just returned from a visit to Kiev near radioactive Chernobyl. Told that a check of his clothing produced no results, Winston orders an underling to "find another kid."

In the cause of better ratings, the program is under orders to replace news with diversion, substance with a parade of personalities, information with sensation. Bookers become staff lynchpins. Agents and p.r. contacts take precedence over newsmakers and sources.

"Volumes of legitimate important news were being downplayed or excluded from the program," McCabe

writes. "Where's the glitz?" one of Winston's predecessors, Jon Katz, would shout. "We need some major glitz here."

When Dan Rather's *Evening News* exercises *droit de seigneur* and expropriates all of *Morning's* Beirut sources during the TWA hostage crisis, Katz suggests a way in which his broadcast can recover: "See if you can get us a weeping hostage. Think of the impact that would make."

If the long agonies of the morning program as a news fief underscore anything, it is the emergence of the anchorperson as avatar of electronic journalism. Over a score of years, there were Mike Wallace and Joseph Benti and John Hart and Hughes Rudd and Sally Quinn (remember?) and Charles Kuralt and Diane Sawyer and Phyllis George and Bill Kurtis and Maria Shriver . . . and . . . and As long as the broadcast resisted the mandate to be Number One, the dogma remained the same: change the anchor, change the anchor, change the . . .

In the days of Ed Murrow and the singularly talented staff of journalists he

recruited, CBS News had been known in the trade as the "correspondent's network." By McCabe's time it had become the network of the news producer and the "star" anchor. In its eschatological phase, working journalists had become, as an executive characterized them to me, "a dime a dozen."

To Bill Leonard in *Storm*, this trend seems as natural as shelling out a piece of the national debt to keep a luminary happy. He notes without comment, "In the age of television, nothing could keep a good reporter with a good agent from doing for a million dollars what he or she once did for love." (Does he really mean to say "reporter?")

This is the apparent lesson of Leonard's first chapter, the most revealing in the book to students of anchormanhood, which he devotes entirely to his successful sponsorship of Dan Rather over Roger Mudd as successor to Walter Cronkite on the *Evening News*, at a cost of \$22 million over ten years. At the crucial meeting, founder-chairman William Paley essentially blesses the deal by likening it to his pivotal acquisition

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of comedian Jack Benny from NBC in 1948.

The sensible reaction came from the then president of CBS Inc., John Backe. "What made us decide on Dan Rather?" he asks Leonard. "Didn't it ever occur to you that you would ruin the salary structure of your whole division?" He adds with unwitting prescience, "I'll never okay something like this as long as I'm president of this company. . . . We have whole divisions that don't make \$22 million in ten years."

The battle is not waged on the ground of merit. Leonard's principal argument is that Rather and his agent have played "high-stakes poker" and that, if CBS doesn't pay the price, ABC will. Rather not only got his money, but was granted a major hand in editorial policy decisions, a role which Cronkite before him had studiously eschewed, his title of managing editor notwithstanding.

Among Rather's powers, McCabe points out, was the virtual right not only to convert the *Evening News* to a news division within the news division ("a bloated walrus that ate all the oysters"),

but also to create "A" and "B" lists of correspondents, determining who would appear on his broadcast and who would not. McCabe writes that "a new era had dawned at CBS News."

Resources were diverted from other broadcasts. There were internal disaffections. Cost-cutting measures in other areas resulted in the loss of jobs — in many cases, the loss of profession — for hundreds. Leonard does not comment on the repercussions, including his own earlier-than-planned retirement when Rather's ratings fell.

All this, chronicled with vividness in McCabe's *Bad News*, less so in Leonard's *Storm*, stands as a cumulative indictment of an uncreative management that felt it necessary and possible to distort news and information into amusement — the only product the network seemed to feel comfortable with. It is, perhaps, a fitting postscript to note that in early May, the new *Morning* program, which has now been turned wholly over to the amusement folks at CBS, got lower ratings than any of its predecessor programs in comparable weeks since

1979 — and that *CBS Evening News*, which once stood unchallenged in its time period, is now frequently bested in the ratings by NBC. There is good reason, therefore, for those who oversee CBS News to park their cynicism beside their banks of video monitors and review their assumptions about what the market really wants — and needs.

A gadget for the Gipper

The Great American Video Game: Presidential Politics in the Television Age

by Martin Schram
William Morrow and Company. 328 pp.
\$17.95

by MARK HERTSGAARD

It takes a certain faith — or is it loyalty? — to conclude a book about television's coverage of the 1984 U.S. presidential campaign by asserting that TV news "stands as the nation's greatest hope." Maybe it's just cheerleading, the hyperbole of a reformer anxious to inspire those whose behavior he hopes to change. Still, it's odd. Virtually all 300 pages that come beforehand suggest, at least to this reader, a gloomier prognosis: that television journalism, oriented first and foremost to the profit that comes from higher ratings, will continue to focus its enormous powers on providing, not the insights and perspective essential to informing the citizenry, but the fluff and spectacle bound to entertain and ultimately distract it. Nevertheless, author Martin Schram, who reported on TV's 1984 campaign coverage for *The Washington Post* and is now associate editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, seems determined to believe the best about his electronic brethren, the evidence he presents against them notwithstanding.

The Great American Video Game opens with the now-familiar tale of how CBS News White House correspondent Lesley Stahl was shocked to hear that the White House had loved her October

Mark Hertsgaard, author of *Nuclear, Inc.*, is completing a book about President Reagan and the press.



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4, 1984, piece about President Reagan's use of television, a piece Stahl had considered hard-hitting. Displaying the propagandist's customary contempt for the intelligence of the masses he seeks to manipulate, a Reagan man who called Stahl after the broadcast explained, "They don't listen to you if you're contradicting great pictures. . . . They don't hear what you are saying if the pictures are saying something different."

Which story introduces Schram's thesis, namely (to dress it up a bit), that Ronald Reagan and his merry men dominated U.S. politics in the 1980s and handily won reelection because they figured out how "to reduce the pronouncements of the [television] medium's news stars to mere dugout chatter." They played the Great American Video Game better than anyone else. Pretty pictures were the key, and Michael Deaver and his fellow videologists (Schram's word) supplied those by the bushel. Since pictures drown out words, it didn't matter what Stahl and those liberals in the media

thought; they ended up running a Reagan commercial every night, like it or not. It was Richard Nixon's dream of going over the head of the press, only better — Reagan went right *through* the press. Pitted against Walter Mondale, the walking video disaster, the Reagan strategy could not help but prevail.

Many individuals populate Schram's video game, but they fall into three main groups: the candidates, who transmit messages; the public, which receives them; and TV journalists, the all-important intermediaries. His book is based on interviews with representatives of all three groups, including both local and network television, as well as on reviews of broadcast transcripts, campaign strategy memos, and other documents. The story focuses on various events in the campaign — among them, the Labor Day kick-off, the New Hampshire primary, and the Reagan-Mondale debates — and examines the interplay between the groups with an eye towards how well the process serves the country.

Not as well as it should, in Schram's view. If only television were more like

print! Television centers its campaign stories on what a candidate *does* on a given day instead of on what he or she *says*, as newspapers do. The tyranny of the video makes television a slave to visuals, to action, to color, to showing viewers pictures of President Reagan at the Pepsi Firecracker 400 stock-car race with country singer Tammy Wynette on the Fourth of July while barely remembering to mention what *The Washington Post* reported in its lead that day — that Reagan said he thought the Soviet Union was a totalitarian government and that Jesse Jackson should not try to negotiate a release for dissident Andrei Sakharov.

Question: As much as Reagan campaign operators must have loved those racing pictures, what's to say they didn't also smile upon the print coverage? After all, it's not as though the *Post* story displayed that much critical distance from the White House line, either. Schram wishes TV had the discipline to do more hard news, but hard news doesn't preclude manipulation. Whether a reporter bases his story on what the candidate says or on what he does, chances are he

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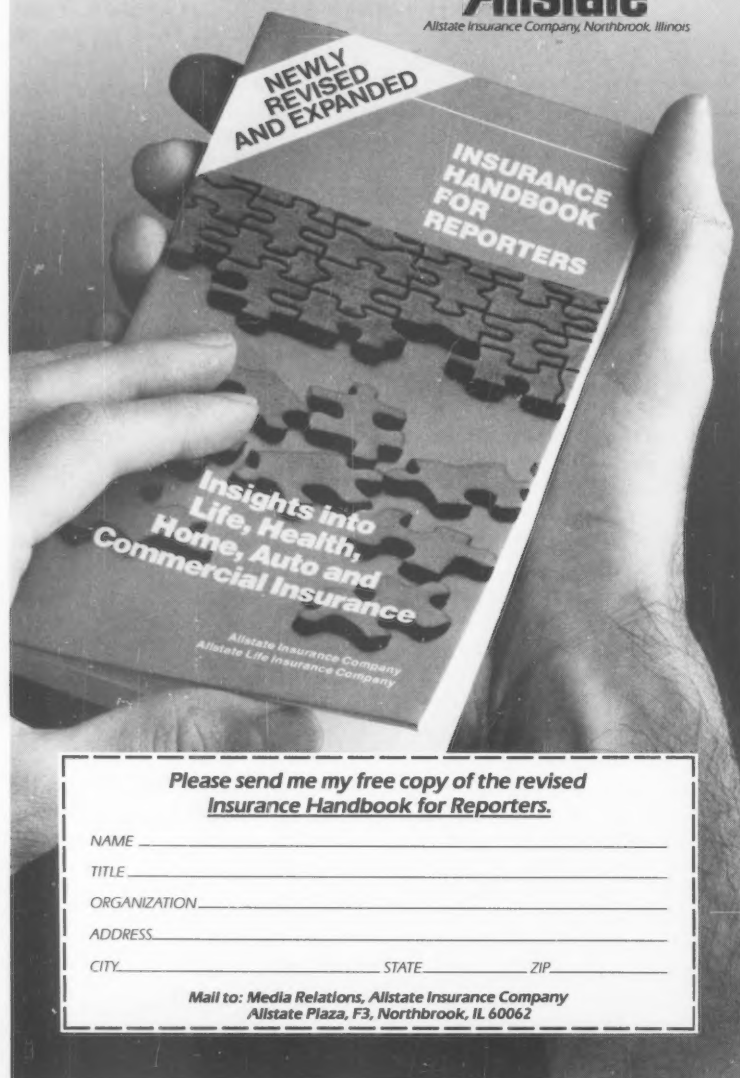
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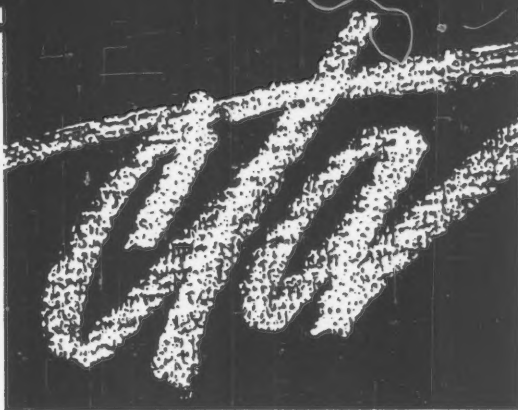
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BOOKS

is still reporting the news on the candidate's terms. Newspapers are scarcely less guilty than television when it comes to serving as a candidate's megaphone, especially when that candidate is the president.

Television is perfectly capable of holding a candidate's feet to the fire when it wants to, but as Sam Donaldson, who covered Reagan for ABC's *World News Tonight* in 1984, admits to Schram, the star system puts a premium on doing line- (or event-) of-the-day stories instead. As Donaldson's executive producer William Lord confirms separately, "Sam is a major star and we want him on the air as much as we can," a mentality that all but gives the game away to the candidate from the start. For once a candidate knows that anything he or she does will be treated as news, the candidate can do exactly what Reagan and Company did in 1984: provide one designated photo opportunity story per day, take no other questions from reporters, and thus determine the basic message to be relayed that night to the TV audience. A diligent reporter can remind viewers that, for example, the president had again declined to say how he would reduce the federal deficit, but, as Donaldson concedes, "just in a phrase, usually in the context of the [story of the] day."

Schram is better when he criticizes television's appalling addiction to polls and the horse race. He offers some valuable if unsurprising research results that show how poll-driven coverage distorts the political process, limiting both the public's information about candidates and candidates' access to the public. According to his own "check of the files of the major newspapers and logs of major television network shows," so-called front-runners Walter Mondale and John Glenn in 1982 and '83 received more print and TV coverage than all the other six major Democratic contenders combined. And Schram quotes Dan Rather admitting that, despite vows to the contrary, once again polls were indeed the tail that wagged the dog of CBS campaign coverage. (The anchorman even uses the F word to express his disgust for polls, saying that if he had his way



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CBS would get out of the polling business altogether.)

Poll results influence not only which candidates get covered, the author points out, but also which issues:

It becomes a nonvicious circle: People can tell pollsters what issues concern them often because those are the issues that have already been brought to their attention by television; and television then looks at the poll results and concludes that these are the issues that should be aired because they are on the minds of the people. People will usually not mention issues that have gotten scant attention on television, even though these topics might well have become matters of public concern if they had been more thoroughly aired.

Serving as a perfect foil for the author, Joan Carrigan, political producer for NBC's *Nightly News* in 1984, defends her network's anemic coverage of issues with a spirited variation on the old network creed that "people don't care about issues." Polls showed that Americans planned to vote for Reagan even though they disagreed with him on specific policies, says Carrigan, so additional issues

coverage would only have been redundant. (She further distinguishes herself by rhetorically asking whether television should "be in the role of the great instructor of the electorate. . . . Or should we be covering the news?" — as if the two must be mutually exclusive.)

Certain of Carrigan's colleagues in the TV news biz prove equally adept at hanging themselves with their own words in this book, although Schram takes pains to gild his descriptions of the bigger stars in the network firmament, lest anyone get the wrong impression. The reader is assured, for example, that each of the big three anchormen is "a damned good" journalist, that ABC's Ted Koppel is "one of journalism's most talented and classy practitioners," and that Donaldson "is a very talented and telegenic journalist. . . ." After a while one wonders if all these brilliant guys had anything to do with the coverage that the author so deplors.

Fraternal fondness does not, however, keep Schram from revealing an embarrassing piece of information about *Washington Post* reporter Sidney Blumenthal. Schram discloses that Blumenthal helped prepare a January 1984 speech for Gary Hart the same week that *The New Republic*, for which Blumenthal worked as a national political correspondent, ran a cover article he had written praising Hart. Blumenthal at the time was also doing campaign analysis for NBC's *Today* show. Likening the situation to columnist George Will's having coached Ronald Reagan before his 1980 campaign debate with President Carter and then appearing on ABC television to critique the debate, Schram argues that the viewers of *Today* and readers of *The New Republic* deserved to know about Blumenthal's private views of and participation in the Hart campaign. Quite so.

The Great American Video Game contains damning quotes from television bigwigs — Dan Rather confesses that CBS News held off doing a story about the president's age until after his disastrous first debate with Mondale because "we were afraid" — but ultimately the book is marred by the author's inability or unwillingness to slide his toe more than half an inch beyond the boundaries

of conventional wisdom. Schram tut-tuts at TV journalists for the usual litany of sins, but ultimately lets them off the hook. Although his closing remarks include the grandiose assertion that "television news has become the greatest force in the nation's presidential process" (greater than money?), a few pages later he is careful to add, "There is nothing that television news correspondents or anchors or producers could have done that would likely have altered the outcome of the 1984 campaign. Reagan would likely have won reelection no matter what — even if the television networks had not catered to his made-for-television pageants and his visually compelling ways."

But what if television (and the press in general), to the identical degree that it allowed itself to be used by the White House, had instead gone after Reagan with hard-edged reporting? Would that really have made no difference? Schram's absolutism may salve the journalistic conscience, but it ignores a truth illustrated most recently by the Gary Hart sex scandal: when the press does decide to go after a politician it can be lethal. It is now a truism of modern presidential politics that no man can gain the Oval Office or govern effectively once there without mastering television. Another way of saying that is that television now exercises something very close to veto power over the running of the presidency; it cannot out-and-out dictate the winner of the election or the agenda of an incumbent, but it can make big trouble for whomever it chooses, dooming would-be presidents to oblivion and sitting presidents to impotence. As Schram suggests, television did play into President Reagan's hands in 1984. But it was not because it had no choice in the matter.

Advocating a new law to require free airtime for no-frills commercials in which candidates would have to speak to the issues, as Schram does in closing, is a worthwhile but pitifully inadequate reform. Television was a sucker for Reagan in 1984 for reasons darker and more discomfiting than its love of pretty pictures. The problem, unfortunately, resists a mere technical fix. ■

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Unfamiliar quotations

Discrepancies in News Quotes from the Colin Thatcher Trial, by Peter Calamai. University of Regina. 1986

"What type of woman would sleep with a man who has just murdered his wife?" Such was the amazingly self-defeating question put by the cross-examining defense attorney to the former mistress of Saskatchewan energy minister Colin Thatcher during the course of Thatcher's sensational trial for the murder of his wife. Or, to put it more precisely, such was the question quoted to readers of the *Toronto Globe and Mail*. A significantly different version of the question ran in *The Calgary Sun* ("What kind of woman sleeps with a man who has said he's just committed murder?"), while the *Moose Jaw Times Herald* printed yet another variation: "What kind of woman sleeps with a man she knows has just committed murder?" In fact, however, none of these presumably verbatim quotations — nor, for that matter, any of those reported by other major Canadian news organizations — was exactly on the mark. What the court transcript shows the defense attorney to have said is this: "Witness, what kind of a woman sleeps with a man she's not married to, when she knows in her mind, if what you tell us is true, that that man has just committed murder? What kind of woman does that, witness?"

Indeed, such discrepancies were far from rare, as this provocative little study by Peter Calamai makes clear. (Not all, however, were of equally serious import. Where the

court transcripts record the accused as testifying that one friend had advised him to "Go to La Costa then. Get a hit man. Lots of them over there," for instance, the report that appeared in the *Winnipeg Free Press* moved the reference out of the supposedly Mafia-run California town: "You could go to Costa Rica and get a hit man. There's lots of them there.") As a working reporter covering the trial for Southam News in the fall of 1984, Calamai had been struck by the differences between his own accounts and those of his colleagues in quoting witnesses, counsel, and judge; subsequently, as a professor at the University of Regina, he undertook an investigation of the accuracy of the trial's most widely printed quotes.

Drawing on a total of 7,262 paragraphs of news copy produced by eight Canadian dailies and two of the country's wire services, Calamai and his researcher extracted the 2,053 paragraphs that contained at least a phrase of direct quotation from any participant in the proceedings that had not previously been provided to the press in a transcript; in turn, these paragraphs were compared with the 1,555 pages of official trial transcript. Forgiveness in judging errors was the order of the day: not counted were rhetorical phrases, the dropping of asides, and false starts; the switching of tenses, definite articles, and pronouns; and the customary grammatical clean-up. But even when measured by such generous criteria, the conclusions were clearly damning: 883 of the quote-containing paragraphs, or 57 percent of the total sample, contained discrepancies, 44 percent of them qualifying as major dis-

tortions of meaning. Of these, 47 percent were attributable to the use of incorrect words, 31 percent to omitted words, 10 percent to extra words, 7 percent to extreme compression, 4 percent to incorrect order, and 1 percent to incorrect attribution or "[quotation] not found." Only one error was attributable to a typo. The lowest rate of discrepancy was found in the wire services, the highest in the tabloids.

How could so much "direct quotation" be so wrong? Responses from ten of the reporters involved point to two major factors: inadequate training in formal note-taking and an unfortunate location of press seats in noisy and remote areas of the courtroom, sometimes as much as forty feet away from the witness box, that made it difficult for reporters to catch all that was being said. (Compounding the problem, Calamai found, was the tendency of copy editors to assume that their own reporters had it right.) Theoretically, at least, solutions to both problems are within easy reach, and Calamai takes the reaction of reporters as a positive sign: to a man (or woman) they were astonished and perturbed at the extent of their errors and eager to improve their work. Interestingly, such impulses did not appear to be universally shared by the managements of their respective news organizations, many of which responded to Calamai's requests for comment with defensiveness or silence.

Such denial is dangerous, in Calamai's view; those who are unmoved by the charge of distorting the public's perception of the criminal justice system, Calamai suggests, or even by the threat to the media's credibility, might want to consider a recent libel action over discrepancies between tape-recorded quotations and those printed in *The New Yorker* magazine. Whether Calamai's findings are typical of the trade, of course, is far from clear, and he urges further studies along similar lines. In the meantime, prudence suggests that when dealing with direct quotation, reporters and copy editors should take more care.

Following the money

The Business of News, Gannett Center Journal, Spring 1987

This promising new quarterly takes the inspiration for its premier issue from the unlofty concept of the bottom line. Nearly a dozen articles by noted journalists, press critics, and media scholars are assembled here, each providing a thoughtful perspective on the relationship between filthy lucre and the news.

The theme is sounded by Richard C. Wald, vice president of ABC News, in the opening piece, "A Ride on the Truth Machine" (Wald's perception of what advertisers want to buy). Tracing the ever-shifting balance between journalism, on the one hand, and the inexorable forces of commerce, technology, and public and private interest on the other, Wald stresses the certainty of impending change — and the uncertainty of what that change will be. As Wald reminds us, the private interests (advertisers) that today serve the public good (news) can be counted on only so long as it pays to advertise in the present media — and it will pay to advertise only so long as public acceptance of those media stays strong. Exploring the question, "Is TV news supposed to make a profit?" both in philosophical and practical terms, ABC news analyst Jeff Greenfield details the paradoxical developments that — "for good or ill" — have carried local news to its present heady state of financial success and brought network news to its current painful pinch. Other insights into local news are offered by Gary Cummings, a professor at Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism and a former general manager of WBBM-TV, the CBS station in Chicago. In an impassioned essay citing the spread of such retrogressive devices as p.r.-inspired features, infomercials, and sponsored news segments, Cummings warns against the trend toward tailoring TV news to what advertisers want.

In the world of print, p-and-l pressures are no less real. Susan Miller, director of editorial development for the Scripps Howard papers in Cincinnati, analyzes the historic impact of — and the telling differences between — two recent Newspaper Readership Project reports: "Changing Needs of Changing Readers" (presented to the nation's editors and publishers in 1979), which prompted innovations both in content and form that fueled the soft-news fad; and "Relating to Readers in the '80s" (completed in 1984), which advocated a back-to-basics, hard-news approach. Current market research, Miller believes, points to a future in which newspapers, increasingly sophisticated about such notions as market penetration, segmentation, and brand loyalty, may put less of their efforts into winning and keeping readers than into meeting the interests and demands of advertisers. Her trenchant piece is followed by "The Metamorphosis of the Newspaper Editor," by Michael Fancher, executive editor of *The Seattle Times* and the recent recipient of an MBA. Documenting the expanding involvement of newspaper editors in such traditionally beyond-the-pale areas as circulation and

promotion, Fancher contends that the future belongs to newsroom managers who can comfortably scale the anachronistic wall between journalism's church and state. The nagging question that arises — "Is what sells all that different from good journalism?" — is posed by Ray Cave, former managing editor of *Time*. Recalling the nine bestselling covers in his eight years at *Time* — from the Jonestown massacre and the Mt. St. Helen's eruption to herpes and aching backs — and sharing his personal list of twelve "cover commandments" ("Politicians sell badly"; "The economy sells worse"; "When in doubt run Cheryl Tiegs"), Cave concludes that, while *Time*'s strength is in the covers that deal with significant issues, it is a news-magazine's responsibility "to explain the phenomenon of Madonna as much as it is to explain the esoterica of arms control." The answer to Cave's question, in other words, is No.

Individually, each of these pieces illuminates the reality that, whatever else American news may be, it is first of all a business. Collectively, they testify to the public emergence of a new definition of journalistic responsibility: the first duty of a news organization is to make money — and survive.

Calling the shots

Editorial Page Editors and Endorsements: Chain-owned vs. Independent Newspapers, by Byron St. Dizier, *Newspaper Research Journal*, Fall 1986

Ask an editorial page editor about publisher interference and chances are you'll hear loud protestations that it's not a problem. Indeed, scholarly surveys over the years consistently have shown that, when it comes to making political endorsements and taking controversial stands, editorial page editors, particularly those at chain-owned papers, enjoy a degree of autonomy that is surprisingly reassuring.

Reassuring, that is, if true: previous studies also have shown that, for all such claims, papers within a given chain somehow tend to endorse the same presidential candidate. Picking up where such ambiguities leave off, the study at hand explores the question of whether presidential endorsements by both chain-owned and independent papers more closely reflect the choice of a paper's editorial page editor or that of its publisher. With other research studies continuing to show the impact of such endorsements on the voting behavior of readers, the question is more than academic.

A professor of communication studies at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, St. Dizier bases his report on the responses he received to an extended questionnaire, sent to randomly selected editorial page editors at U.S. dailies with circulations of over 50,000, that was designed to elicit the political leanings of the paper's publisher and editorial page editor, the process followed in making endorsements, the paper's position on nine campaign issues (e.g., contra aid, abortion, school prayer), and its choice for president in the election of 1984.

Of the eighty-five editors who responded, 58 percent worked for chain-owned papers, 42 percent for papers that were independently owned, and in both groups, almost equal numbers (61 and 64 percent, respectively) said that publishers consulted with the editorial staff in deciding whom to endorse. Though characterizing their publishers as more conservative than themselves, similarly high proportions reported that they were "very satisfied" with the way endorsements were handled at their papers and that disagreements with their publishers were rare. Curiously, however, a clear majority of editors at both chain-owned and independent papers (respectively, 57 and 58 percent) reported they had voted for Mondale, while their papers' endorsements revealed a rather different tilt: independent papers had been evenly split and chain-owned papers had given Reagan a nearly three-to-one edge.

Aside from worrying about what seems to be a genetic disposition on the part of editors, especially those who work for chains, to claim more independence than they actually have, is there any reason for alarm? St. Dizier's conclusions are mixed. On the one hand, he takes comfort from his findings that, at least so far as day-to-day content was concerned, the editorial pages did indeed reflect their editors' own, more liberal views: by large, sometimes sweeping margins, papers in both categories took stands on social, economic, environmental, and foreign policy issues that were in line with the Democratic platform in 1984 and that Republicans opposed. On the other hand, his finding that presidential endorsements at chain-owned papers so strongly conformed to the conservative opinions of their publishers, combined with the dramatic rise in the number of papers controlled by chains — by 1984, they were accounting for some 78 percent of the nation's total circulation — suggests the direction future endorsements will take in 1988 and beyond. Unless, of course, editorial page editors show a little more gumption and fight to win endorsements for the candidates they personally support. ■

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

David Broder on 'buried treasures'

TO THE REVIEW:

Robert Sherrill is such a splendid writer it's a damn shame he never learned to read. I enjoyed his essay, "The Perils of Punditry" (CJR, May/June), but had a little trouble believing he had sold it to you as a review of my book on Washington political reporting (not column-writing) called *Behind the Front Page*.

I trust that readers will examine the book for themselves and, in the process, discover that it bears little resemblance, in subject or tone, to the work he described. But since he dragged in a column of mine that he has used twice before as an illustration of the quality of my work, let me cite it as an example of the gentleman's reading problem.

According to Sherrill, an October 18, 1981, column I wrote referred to Richard Nixon "not only as an 'elder statesman' but

as one of our 'prematurely buried treasures.'" Sherrill alleges that such "cosmetic treatment" contributed to the journalistic rehabilitation of Nixon's reputation, of which I complain in the book.

The column was written after President Reagan sent former Presidents Nixon, Ford, and Carter to Anwar Sadat's funeral. That event produced a spate of articles suggesting that former presidents should play a more active role in American public life. My column argued exactly the opposite — that, despite what I ironically termed "the latest disinterment of these prematurely buried treasures," the notion was a bad one.

I wrote: "You can imagine some well-meaning foundation leaping forward to propose an annual 'Presidents' Convocation,' where all the former occupants of the Oval Office would gather for a weekend, pool their wisdom on current topics, and then issue their pronouncements.

"That is a notion that ought to be embraced with great wariness — if not actually strangled at birth."

The reason for caution, I wrote, was that the American people had good reason for turning these men out of office and all of them hankered "to be back there again." Even if Nixon "recognizes that there is a considerable difference between being pardoned and being nominated," I wrote, we know from history how bright the flame of ambition burns in him.

The only other reference to Nixon in the column describes him as a man who had "been run out of town one step ahead of an impeachment jury."

The column concluded: "They may be elder statesmen. But don't doubt that the itch for power is there. It is there. Oh, is it there."

That is the column which Sherrill asserts showed I was squishy-soft on Nixon. I know the gentleman would not distort. I do wish he could read.

DAVID S. BRODER
Washington, D.C.

Those new Women

TO THE REVIEW:

In "Who's the New Woman in Town?" (CJR, May/June), Pamela Black hit a real nail on the head when she wrote about the crop of

new women's regionals: "As with most magazines, the regionals have to target upscale readers."

That's a ball game women's regionals didn't invent and, in fact, we here at *Vermont Woman* struggle against it constantly. But Black didn't go where that might have taken her, exploring business and advertising interests that impose American-style self-censorship on a "free press." Instead, using psychology women ought to be familiar with, she blames the victim and demands that women's regionals be more perfect than the general lot of magazines.

The single indirect reference to our publication criticized as "irksome" the "breezy features and advice" that so typify regionals — in our case, "how to . . . plan a wedding in Vermont." We all know that publications feature "wedding supplements" not because readers demand them, but because advertisers like them. It so happens that our wedding feature was far more valuable to women readers — and more tongue-in-cheek — than the sappy stuff you see everywhere in dailies and weeklies much better capitalized than women's regionals.

Author Black does at least concede that "regionals are important forums for information and debate." Perhaps, then, she saw our issue devoted to the Vermont Equal Rights Amendment, saw at least the headlines on stories about teen pregnancy here in Vermont, treatment of rape victims, state training programs for welfare mothers, business-supported day-care — as well as our interviews with and endorsements of major political candidates, and a survey of candidates on women's issues done with the help of a coalition of women's organizations in the state.

We here at *Vermont Woman* are proud that we are not *The Michigan Woman*, or *Houston Woman*, or *Boston Woman* — nor are they trying to be us. Because we're grass-roots and not owned by male publishing conglomerates, none of us, thank god, comes close to being the insufferably hoity-toity *New York Woman* that Black seems to admire.

What we are is serious. And struggling. And regional — which means, yes, it's true, as Black writes: "A calendar of local events and profiles of hometown girls who have made good are de rigueur" for us.

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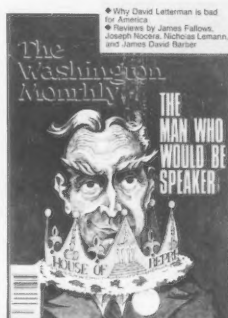
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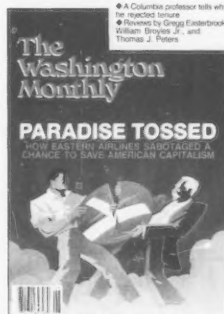
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The *Review* wants to know, "Who [sic] do these women's magazines popping up all over think they're talking to?" I want to know, whom does Pamela Black think *she's* talking to? One of the "hometown girls" we've featured on our cover is Vermont Governor Madeleine M. Kunin. She didn't mention how she still manages to do her nails, and we didn't ask her.

RICKEY GARD DIAMOND
Editor
Vermont Woman
Burlington, Vt.

TO THE REVIEW:

Pamela Black has it right. The new regional magazines for women play it safe. Aimed at the getting and spending crowd, they give only a passing nod to the movement that made it all possible. They forget that hard-won gains can be demolished. Or that more and more women and children are falling through the shredded safety net.

The flip side of this kind of publishing is feminist advocacy journalism: those few publications that confront women's issues and locate them firmly in a male-dominated, still inequitable society. *New Directions for Women*, along with Boston's *Sojourner* and Washington, D.C.'s, *Off Our Backs*, takes

women seriously. Quirky and controversial, independent and sometimes outrageous, we persistently agitate for change.

We enjoyed reading about the regionals. We agree with Black that women also need feistier journalism with political depth. That's what we're about.

PHYLLIS KRIEDEL
Managing editor,
New Directions for Women
Englewood, N.J.

The error column

Several errors slipped into Peter Andrews's "The Art of Sportswriting" (CJR, May/June) in the editing process. Dan Parker became Don Parker and when, in 1941, Ted Williams "took his licks against the Philadelphia Athletics in a doubleheader" he went, not six for fourteen, but four for six. Furthermore, Chris Rouch, editor of *The Auburn Plainsman* at Alabama's Auburn University, notes (as did Joyce Hergenhan of Westport, Connecticut) that "Alan Ameche went over tackle to beat the Giants in 1958, not 1959." And, finally (the editors hope), Jack Orr, of New York City, points out that the first line of Grantland Rice's celebrated quatrain reads "When the One Great Scorer . . .," not "When the Great Scorer. . ."

Boston black and white

TO THE REVIEW:

There's got to be a better way to find out if reporters and editors are biased than Kirk A. Johnson's "Black and White in Boston" (CJR, May/June). Johnson concludes that Boston's daily newspapers and major broadcasters are biased against blacks because they failed to report some routine "good news" stories about blacks. The stories he cites are typical weekly or small-town daily fare: an interview with the winner of a Miss Black Massachusetts Teen contest, a neighborhood cleanup program. Big-city newspapers don't run these stories about whites. Why should they run them about blacks?

Another story Johnson says the big boys neglected was about Charles Yancey, a candidate for state auditor last year. But, contrary to what Johnson says, Yancey was not "the first black person to qualify for a statewide ballot" in Massachusetts. Has Johnson forgotten Edward Brooke, who was *elected* on a statewide ballot to the U.S. Senate?

SUE BASS
Chelmsford, Mass.

Kirk A. Johnson replies: *Whether the unreported positive events in the black neighbor-*

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hoods would have been carried by the white media had they occurred in white communities is a matter of opinion. The point of my study is that an editor's color and class influence his or her news judgment. This is supported by the strikingly different profiles of Boston's black neighborhoods that emerged through the white and black media. Given the subjective nature of news decisions, this should not be surprising. Charles Yancey did, as I wrote, make state Democratic party history. Ms. Bass is correct, however: Yancy was not, as I also wrote, "the first black person to qualify for a statewide ballot." Brooke, a Republican, was.

Town meeting

TO THE REVIEW:

A Dart to the *Columbia Journalism Review* for inaccurate reporting in its Darts and Laurels column (CJR, May/June) concerning the KRON-TV Town Meetings. We did not delay "the airing of the program for a week in order to give [Napa chamber of commerce] members a private preview." It aired as scheduled [after the preview].

I might add that it is not unusual for a television station to invite community members to preview special programming. It was

not an invitation to change what I had determined to be a fair and accurate program. The "Napa Town Meeting" was going to, and did, air without changes.

By the way, we are planning to televise the next town meeting, scheduled for San Jose, on June 17th.

JAMES H. SMITH
Vice-president and general manager
KRON-TV
San Francisco, Calif.

The editors reply: *We regret having stated, erroneously, that the airing of the program was delayed.*

The Thomson touch

TO THE REVIEW:

In "The Thomson Machine: Small Papers, Big Profits" (CJR, May/June), Frank Miles, general manager of Thomson's U.S. operations, is quoted as saying, "I don't know of any of our newspapers that haven't improved since we've acquired them." I know of at least one: the Eureka, California, *Times-Standard*.

I was the editor of the *Times-Standard* when Thomson assumed managerial control in 1972 and I can attest that the emphasis

thereafter was on bottom-line profits, a squeezed staff and news hole, and, most galling, an abject unwillingness to deal with any issue that upset the local power structure. After a year I was fired. The official reason given was that I had refused to publish a "family newspaper." I believe the real reason was that I resisted the notion that the news pages of the paper should be used to sell a local dam project that would have financially benefited the publisher's friends and insisted that the controversy be accorded evenhanded treatment, even though, ironically, I personally favored the project for its benefits to the community as a whole and endorsed it vigorously in editorials.

Since then, the newspaper has lost a substantial amount of circulation and has, indeed, become a typical Thomson product.

DAN WALTERS
Political columnist
The Sacramento Bee
Sacramento, Calif.

This is the underclass?

TO THE REVIEW:

I take exception to the inclusion of *Los Angeles Times* editorial trainees in "Journalism's New Underclass?" (CJR, March/



TORT REFORMER?

Insurance words don't always mean what they are intended to mean to non-insurance people. Example: In insurance lingo, a tort reformer is someone trying to improve the civil justice system. . . not a baker fancying up some tortes.

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UNFINISHED BUSINESS

April). I don't doubt that the practice of hiring inexperienced reporters at low wages to do nonchallenging and tedious work goes on in the industry, but exploitation is not an issue at the *Times*. Our trainees are full-time, temporary employees for up to two years, not part-time stringers. They receive most of the same benefits as regular staff members and the same cost-of-living salary adjustments as other staff members.

Like all reporters, suburban trainees do their share of the mundane. But in the last three years they have also done several hundred by-lined stories that have been picked up by the full-run editions of the *Times* and more than a score have run on page one. They routinely do lead stories and cover pieces for suburban section fronts. One former trainee, now a staff writer at *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, spent three months reporting and writing a major series that ran in one section.

Though these positions are not specifically designed to lead to staff writer positions, five persons have been promoted and retained in that capacity.

BOB RAWITCH
Suburban editor
The Los Angeles Times
Los Angeles, Calif.

Amplification

In a letter to the *Review*, Mert Proctor, managing editor of *The Stars and Stripes*, European edition, complains that, in "Stars and Stripes and Censorship" (CJR, January/February), we lumped the European edition "with its namesake [the Pacific *Stars and Stripes*], which lies half a world away in miles and a considerable distance in terms of problems of 'censorship.'" Proctor argues that even though Navy Captain Dale Patterson "quit his job [as publisher of the European edition], fed up with attempts to influence content," those efforts to interfere with the paper's editorial independence were not ultimately successful.

Proctor concludes his letter by writing: "I think any editor who would spend some time with us would envy the freedom of operation and editorial content that we have. The military 'publishers' are a hell of a lot more tolerant of criticism than some stateside publishers who sleep uneasily because some big advertiser might have been offended by a news story."

Deadline

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the September/October issue, letters should be received by July 17. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

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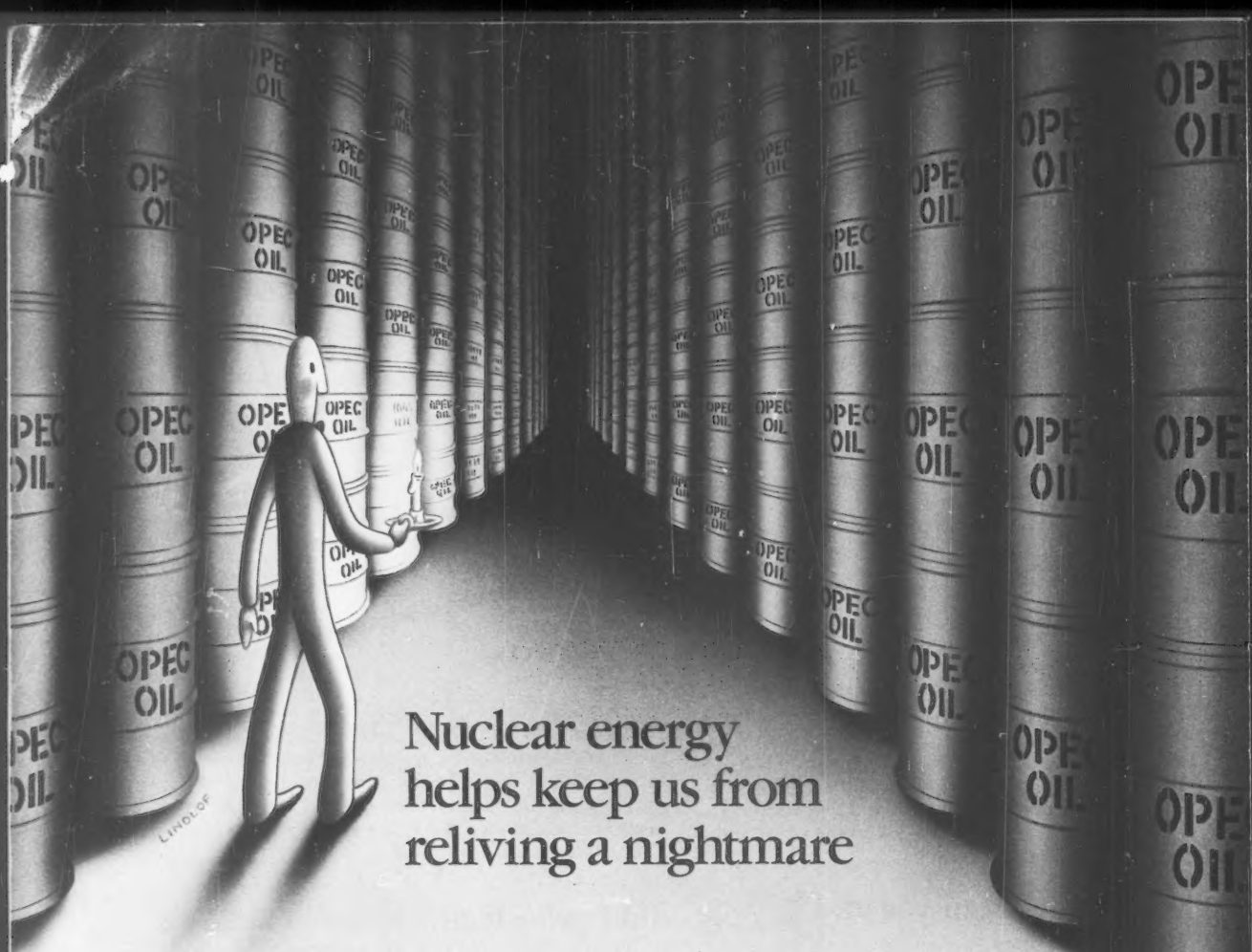
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Nuclear energy helps keep us from reliving a nightmare

The 1973 Arab oil crisis is a haunting reminder of the darker side of foreign oil dependence. Since then, America has turned more to electricity from nuclear energy and coal to help restore our energy security. As a result, these are now our leading sources of electricity and a strong defense against an increasing oil dependence that again threatens America's national energy security.

A dangerous foreign oil dependence

America imported four million barrels of oil a day in 1985. Last year that increased by another 800,000 barrels a day. The danger? Most of these new barrels come directly from OPEC. And the U.S. Department of Energy estimates that by year-end 1987, oil imports will be

30% higher than the 1985 level—an ominous trend.

U.S. Interior Secretary Donald Hodel recently warned that "OPEC is most assuredly getting back into the driver's seat" and our increasing dependence will be "detrimental to the country's economic and national security and its financial well-being."

Nuclear electricity's contribution

America's electric utilities have helped diminish OPEC's impact. Today, over 100 nuclear plants make nuclear energy our second largest electricity source, behind coal.

And nuclear energy has helped cut foreign oil demand. It's saved America over two billion barrels of oil since 1973, and our nuclear plants continue to cut oil use. The energy analysts at Science Concepts, Inc. estimate that by the year 2000, nuclear energy will have saved us between seven and twelve billion barrels of oil.

Nuclear energy for a secure future

Nuclear energy is not just helping here in America. According to OPEC, nuclear energy has permanently displaced about six million barrels of oil a day in world markets.

The lessons we learned in 1973 are lessons we can't afford to forget. Nuclear energy and coal can't offer us guarantees against another oil crisis. But the more we hear about the return of OPEC dominance, the more we need to remember the critical role played by electricity from coal and nuclear energy in fueling America's economy and protecting our future.

For a free booklet on energy independence, write to the U.S. Committee for Energy Awareness, P.O. Box 1537 (OP28), Ridgely, MD 21681. Please allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Information about energy
America can count on
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The Lower case

Soviets crown their first beauty queen

The (Northern New Jersey) Record 3/18/87



Reuter photo

How Kempf got behind left up in air

Times-Colonist (Victoria, B.C.) 4/1/87

Madison lakes plan advances

Wisconsin State Journal 5/19/87

S. Florida illegal aliens cut in half by new law

The Miami News 2/20/87

Once again the Press Club of New Orleans and the Loyola University Department of Communications are co-sponsoring the Silver Scribe writing competition for high school journalists, a contest which exposes the aspiring journalists of the riggers of the news business.

Press Club of New Orleans 2/25/87

"The Bee Gave Me Fast Service and Great Resluts!"

POOL TABLE, custom built, excel immac. cond, \$1200. Days or even less.

The Sacramento Bee 5/26/87

Eastern Pilots Mount Pickets At Airports

St. Louis Post-Dispatch 4/3/87

The Sacred Cat award is named after the club's mascot, Anubis, a mummified cat.

He has been in the national spotlight frequently in recent months, testifying before Congress and appearing in numerous debates as chairman of the US National Catholic Conference of Bishops committee that drafted "Economic Justice for All: Pastoral Letter on Catholic Social Teaching and the US Economy."

The Milwaukee Journal 4/15/87

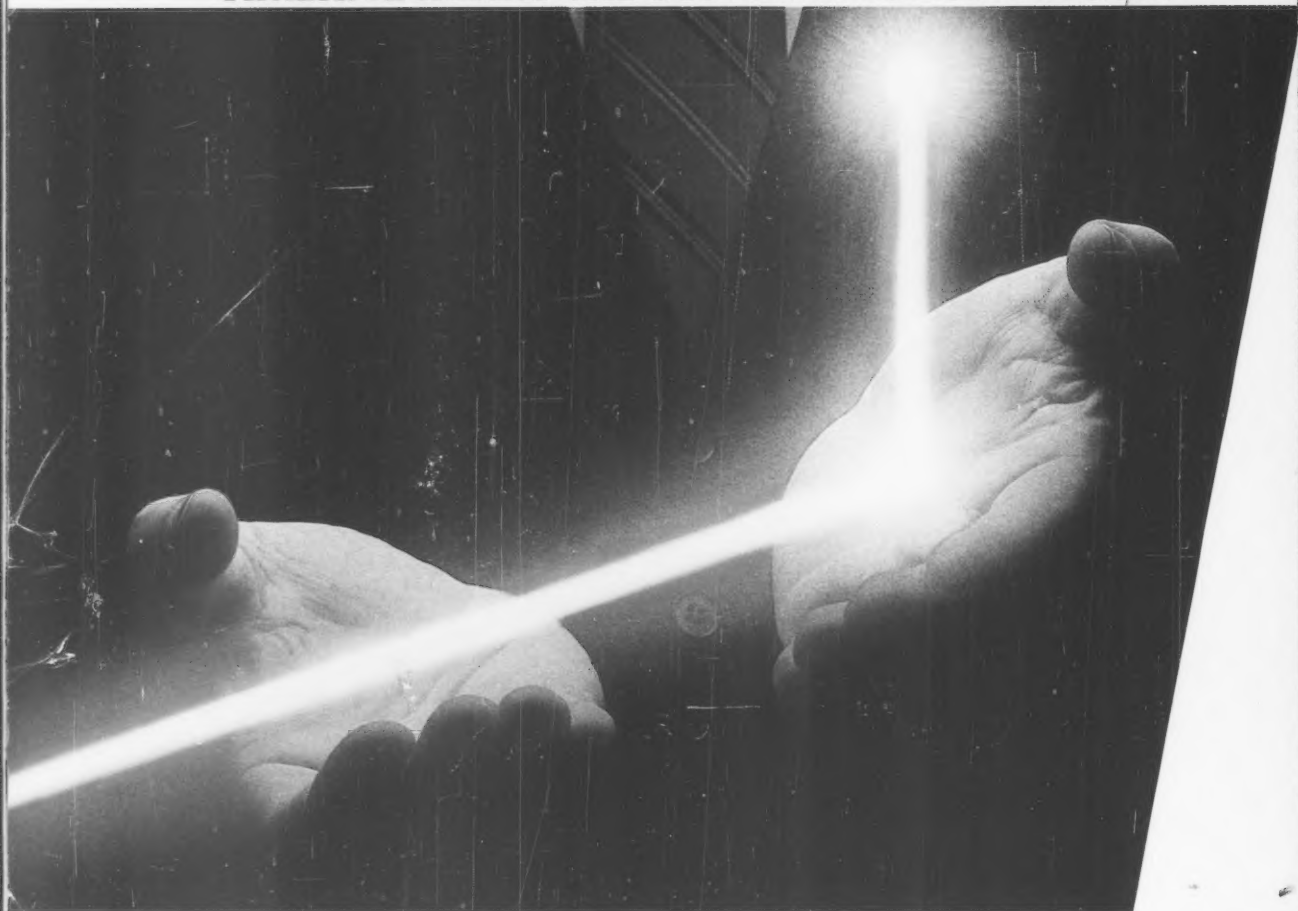
Let us not forget that the American press spares no one in public life, which is as it should be.

The Miami Herald 5/9/87

Rhode Island secretary excites furniture experts

The Star-Ledger (Newark, N.J.) 6/2/87

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